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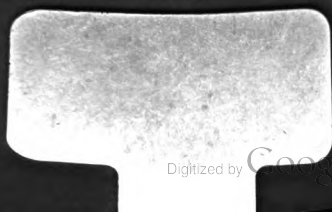
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Claims and Counterclaims



Maude Wilder Goodwin





CLAIMS AND COUNTERCLAIMS

Claims and Counterclaims

BY

MAUDE WILDER GOODWIN

Author of "Four Roads to Paradise," etc.

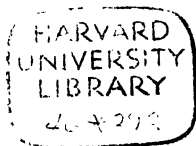


New York
Doubleday, Page & Company
1907

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Published, August, 1905

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LIST OF CHARACTERS

JOYCE ELDRIDGE, daughter of a New York banker.

MRS. FENWICK, her aunt.

MME. DU PONT, her cousin.

MR. ELDRIDGE, her father.

ANTHONY DILKE, a young physician.

BRACKETT NEWBOLD, an artist.

EUSTACE BRANDYCE, correspondent of a London paper.

JACOB SECOR, founder of the Secor Library.

MINOR CHARACTERS

HENRY ELDRIDGE, brother of Joyce.

MRS. DILKE, mother of Anthony Dilke.

REV. JAMES MACASSAR.

MR. JOHN CANTOR.

MR. THOMAS TOWNS.

MRS. TOWNS.

MRS. CANTOR.

CLAIMS AND COUNTERCLAIMS

CHAPTER I

CLAIMS

WHAT is your idea of gratitude, Newbold?"

"Gratitude, my dear Dilke, is a sentiment reluctantly entertained for a benefit grudgingly conferred."

"I am not likely to get much help from you in your present mood; but I shall ask you one more question: If a man had saved your life at the risk of his own, what would you feel that you owed him?"

"My life, evidently."

"I happen to be in earnest, Newbold."

"Really! That is a pity. But does it follow that because you are in earnest I must be?"

"It would be more civil to answer a serious question seriously."

Newbold threw back his head, and thrust out his chin till his pointed Van Dyck beard was almost horizontal. He switched at a head of goldenrod with his cane for an instant before he replied:

"Let us be serious, then, by all means."

"Thank you."

"Not at all. It is an affair of necessity. Two are needed for the making of a jest, but one can inflict seriousness. May I trouble you to repeat your serious question in simple words adapted to a light and trifling mind?"

"I could not make it simpler," Dilke answered with some irritation. "What I say is this: Is a man, whose life has been saved by another, never to be free from a sense of obligation?"

Newbold put a question in his turn: "Is this a problem in casuistry or does it refer to some event which actually happened?"

"It actually happened. It is my own case," blurted out Dilke, thrusting his hands into his pockets, and restlessly changing his position from the turf where he had been sitting to a rock opposite Newbold.

"Ah!" exclaimed his friend, "that interests me directly, centres my attention where it belongs. I confess that as you first put it my thoughts wandered off to the fellow who saved the life. I was wondering if he would feel a sense of responsibility for reinflicting a man upon a world possibly better off without him. But of course if the case was *yours*——"

"It is mine," Dilke reiterated doggedly. "That is why I do not care to jest about it."

"I see. Nothing is more difficult than taking our own affairs jovially."

"Apparently," Dilke rejoined, "it is more difficult to take our friends' affairs in any other way. It is astonishing to me that you should have so much comprehension and so little sympathy."

Newbold received his companion's remark with equanimity.

"Go on," he said; "that is, if you mean to tell me about it. A man saved your life——?"

"Yes."

"When and where?"

"Some months ago, when I was camping in the Rockies with two other men. One of them was Brandyce—Eustace Brandyce—did you ever hear of him?"

"Yes, I knew him rather well in Paris—a very agreeable companion—But—" Newbold raised his eyebrows as he spoke.

"So you have felt it, too!" exclaimed Dilke with a certain tragic intensity. "Then you will understand my state of mind, and I can explain it without a sense of disloyalty. Brandyce was, as you say, a charming companion; but in camping one learns to know a man so well, and intimacy is a dangerous experiment. Of course the fault may lie only in the combination of

temperaments. Matches are good, and gunpowder has its uses, but propinquity brings out the worst qualities of both."

"Tell me the story first and leave your reflections till the end," Newbold urged.

"We had been camping for a fortnight," Dilke continued, "and I had been trying in vain to induce those men to get up in time to see the sunrise from the top of the mountain. They said that no sight on earth was worth the loss of a morning's sleep. I suggested that they make up their sleep at the other end of the night; but Brandyce asked why he should go to bed before he was ready, in order to rise before he wished."

Newbold turned aside that he might smile unobserved.

"So you went alone?" he queried.

"I went alone, and was well repaid for my trouble. The sun stood a red ball of fire on the horizon, and a row of black-pointed firs stretched like a stockade along the range of the mountain spur. I wish that you could have painted it, Newbold."

The artist shrugged his shoulders. "I have no taste for panoramic chromos of sunrise," he said; "I should as soon undertake to paint a rainbow, that section of aërial watermelon; but go on. Was it on the mountain top that you came to grief?"

"It was on the way down," said Dilke, with some trace of lingering resentment in his tone. "I slipped on the edge of a cliff and fell thirty feet. It might have been three hundred but for a tree which caught me as I fell."

"Otherwise I fancy you would not be talking here to-day."

"Assuredly not. The fall nearly killed me as it was, and I hung unconscious in the branches. It was there that Brandyce found me, and with his usual cleverness—whatever you think of Brandyce you cannot deny his cleverness——"

"I never attempted to deny his cleverness. Don't drag me in."

Dilke declined to notice the interpolation. With the prodigality of detail which we are all prone to bestow on accounts of our own experiences, he went on: "Brandyce had brought a rope. He had always said that a lariat was of use in any situation, from a roundup to a lynching. When he reached the edge of the cliff he leaned over, and, seeing me caught there in the boughs, he determined at once to take all risks to rescue me. Think of that, with a cliff falling sheer three hundred feet beneath! A brave man might have been excused for flinching. But Brandyce never hesitated. He tied one end of his rope around a sturdy tree, and then, dropping over the cliff, went down hand over

hand to the branches where I lay. He knew that if I became conscious and made the slightest motion I should fall the whole distance, so he tied the rope round my body and then climbed the cliff to call for aid. He imperilled his own life at every step."

"And you were ungrateful enough not to like Brandyce after that?"

"I was. I put in no plea, no disclaimer, no excuse. But I assure you that, as I lay in my tent on the night after the accident, with a broken arm, a bruised body and a bruised mind, my thoughts were not to be envied."

"I know all about that," answered Newbold with more sympathy than he had yet shown. "It is an unequal fight when a man struggles with his thoughts. There are so many of them and only one of him, and when he lies down they have him at a double disadvantage. Then they perch on his chest and whisper in his ear and dance a can-can in his brain."

"Precisely. Turn and twist as I would, I could not escape recognition of the fact that I owed the greatest obligation which it was possible to incur to a man whom I neither wholly liked nor entirely trusted. The thing which I resented in my inmost soul was being compelled to stand by consequences not of my own making. A benefaction had been thrust upon me. I had

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neither the grace to accept the gift gaily, nor the dishonesty to refuse to acknowledge it. The most depressing experience in life is the sense of inability to summon an emotion demanded by the situation."

Dilke paused for an instant, and then went on: "Life surely is not such a precious boon that a man must be glad to accept it from uncongenial hands. I owe my life to Brandyce, and the debt is one which can be paid only on the instalment plan. That's the worst of it. I have sworn to him that if I could ever render him any service I would do it if it cost my heart's blood, but such opportunities do not offer in our sheltered commonplace world. If I could save *his* life at the expense of my own and be quits, I should be only too glad; but to go about forever with this load of gratitude hung like a millstone around my neck, disliking my benefactor and cursing myself for not being able to like him—you will admit that it is a hard case."

Dilke paused and sat looking with bent brows at the weatherbeaten grasses around him. The autumn air stirred them gently, the clouds floated calmly in the sky above, crickets chirped at his feet. Newbold waited for some time, hoping that the quietness of nature would communicate itself to his friend's feverish mood; but he soon saw that it was having

no effect, and he determined to try vigorous measures.

"Dilke," he said deliberately, "You are a good fellow with a real gift for friendship; but you have a streak of surly obstinacy in you and you are too omniscient by half. For the omniscience I do not hold you to blame. It is practically thrust upon you by your profession. If you once admitted that you did not know very much, that your practice was largely a matter of guesswork and your cures largely a matter of luck, away would go your patients to the quack in the next street. People demand omniscience in their physician, and of course you could not afford to offer less; but the surliness is another matter. You really ought to take that in hand."

"Have I no other amiable weaknesses with which you can taunt me?"

"Yes, now you speak of it, I should add a morbid sensitiveness and a pride which makes an obligation cut like a whiplash. For instance, in this very case in point, I dare say you liked Brandyce well enough until he saved your life."

Dilke flipped a pebble between his thumb and forefinger and watched it as it jumped along down the hill. "I did not dislike him," he answered, "but I distrusted him."

"What made you suspicious? Perhaps we are both too ready to believe evil of Brandyce. Remember, old Fuller used to say that the man who proceeds on half evidence will not do quarter justice."

"Suspicion," Dilke answered, setting his lips obstinately, "is an instinct, and I have never neglected its warnings without regretting it afterward."

Newbold saw that Dilke was growing more and more bitter as he talked. Thinking to add a consoling word, he said: "Why do you not dismiss the whole thing from your mind? You may never see Brandyce again. He is scarcely likely to appear in Pieria."

Dilke turned and looked full at Newbold. "You may call it superstition if you like," he answered, "but I have a feeling that something will happen to bring Brandyce and me together and to make me regret that we ever met."

The two men sat looking down at the little town of Pieria which lay in the bowl of the valley below them. It was not a beautiful town except to eyes which could find pleasure in outward evidences of progress and prosperity. Here and there a white spire or stone-capped tower rose above the flatness of the low-roofed houses. On the bank of the river which flowed through the town towered huge brick chimneys, their

tops blackened by the smoke which poured out of their dragon throats in eddying columns, by day and by night. Scattered in among them, square-shouldered mills, unabashed by their ugliness, thrust themselves insistently upon the eye with a certain grim pride, as if sturdily conscious of the fact that spire and tower and roof-tree were all dependent upon them for support, and that education and religion must in the end come a-begging, cap in hand, to industry and commerce.

Dilke was so familiar with the scene that it made little impression upon him; but to Newbold its ugliness was ever new, consciously annoying and constantly suggestive of a generation which had sacrificed grace to power, and had sold its birth-right of beauty for a mess of manufacture.

Newbold and Dilke had been friends in college, where they acquired in common a taste for tobacco and a lenient attitude toward learning; but afterward their paths diverged. Newbold went to Paris to study painting and Dilke betook himself to the medical schools. Their first meeting had come recently, when Newbold received a commission to paint a portrait of the Reverend James Macassar, a leading clergyman of Pieria, and formerly president of a theological seminary, which desired to preserve a copy of his features to decorate its walls.

Dilke had settled in Pieria to practise medicine. So it came to pass that the two men had met on that curious basis of mingled intimacy and strangeness which comes of interrupted friendship.

Newbold wondered that the years had not changed Dilke more, and in greater degree subdued his youthful strenuousness. He did not enjoy playing anvil to this young Siegfried's sword.

Dilke's nature was one which saw life neither steadily nor whole, but in the distorted focus of large enthusiasms and unreasoning depressions, a nature prone to rush, on small provocation, into useless sacrifices, and to do many foolish things from headlong impulse.

Newbold, weary of watching the smoking chimneys of the town, turned his gaze downward on the brook which ran its madcap race through the gully at his feet. A three days' rain, had brimmed it to the edge of its channel and sent the foam flying in a delicate coquetry of spray over the ferns that fringed the banks. At length he leaned back and betook himself to humming softly:

"Too much care will turn a young man gray,
Too much care will turn an old man to clay.
My wife shall dance and I will sing,
So merrily pass the day,
For I count it one of the wisest things
To drive dull care away."

Dilke looked at the singer. "Clever scheme that of yours, to drive care away by singing to it," he said. Then he laughed. People generally did laugh when they looked at Newbold. His cheerfulness was so out of proportion to his circumstances that that fact alone created an atmosphere of exhilarating incongruity.

"Yes," he answered to Dilke's comment, "singing is at least better than talking, since it is generally cheerful and it saves the hearer the trouble of a reply, or even of listening if he is not in the mood."

"No one ever need listen," Dilke replied, and added qualifyingly, "unless he is a married man."

Newbold laughed. "It is certainly one of the alleviations of bachelorhood," he said, "that a man is not obliged to listen when he is not in the mood."

"One of the alleviations!" echoed Dilke. "Say rather one of the innumerable privileges of that exalted condition."

"Yes," assented Newbold, striving to convince himself, "a bachelor is a man who would rather be lonely than bored."

Dilke drew out his pipe, filled and lighted it, and then threw away the match, as he added:

"A bachelor is a man clever enough to learn from the experience of his friends."

"What a bluff we are both putting up!" Newbold exclaimed. "We know well enough that a bachelor is a man who spends half the night in trying to figure out how an income which has proved too small for one may be made adequate for two. About midnight he gives up the problem and goes to the club."

"I, for one, do no such figuring," Dilke maintained stoutly. "I have never seen a woman whom I wished to marry."

"Ah, you have not the artistic temperament. When beauty appeals to every instinct you must wish to make it your own. The trouble is that other beauties appeal also, and fickleness results. Fickleness is a tribute to the universal at the expense of the individual. But if you are not in love and anxious to earn enough money to enable you to marry, may I ask why have you planted yourself in this little hole? The crudeness, the monotony, the unloveliness——"

"I can readily understand," Dilke interrupted, "how Pieria would strike an artist; but for a physician it is different. Broken bones and fevers are the same the world over."

"It is quite true," Newbold assented, "that interest in your work may reconcile you to lack of beauty. When I am painting a portrait I never ask myself whether the face is beautiful; I am studying the features, the colouring, the

essential qualities which make the personality. I fancy it is the same with the place which you call your home. You are at work. You are absorbed. You are oblivious of its shortcomings."

The men rose and strolled slowly homeward. There was little speech between them, each man being occupied with his own reflections.

Dilke's thoughts turned obstinately backward to the old corroding theme.

"I wish that it had been Newbold to whom I owed my life," he murmured under his breath. "I trust Newbold—but Brandyce——?"

CHAPTER II

AN EMBARRASSMENT OF RICHES

THE art of portrait painting lies in gratifying the subject, without incurring the scorn of the critics; so that when they say, "How striking the resemblance is!" the original will not frown, and when he says it they will not smile.

Fortunately, perhaps, for Newbold, there were no critics in Pieria, and Doctor Macassar professed himself well satisfied with his "counterfeit presentment," though he suggested that the hand thrust into the front of the coat was a little larger than life, and the expression of the face somewhat less spiritual than his parishioners had expected.

Newbold's only regret in finishing the portrait was that it gave him no excuse for tarrying longer with Anthony Dilke. The two men parted better friends for their weeks together, and promised each other that the time should not be long before they met again.

A few weeks after Newbold had taken his leave Dilke found himself involved in a situation which was destined to affect his whole future

career, though at first it seemed to have only a surface relation to him.

The trustees of the free library of Pieria gathered in the directors' room to discuss a financial crisis in the affairs of that institution. The building was not yet completed, though its tower of stone rose ambitiously in the air. It had been begun in a time of prosperity and encumbered with a mortgage. Now the day of reckoning was at hand. Hard times had followed on the heels of plenty. Subscriptions had failed. There was not enough money in the treasury to pay the interest on the mortgage, and the trustees had personally guaranteed the debt.

"Where is the money to come from?" asked the president of the Board, more to relieve his mind than in the expectation of any reply.

Dilke, who was secretary of the Board and its youngest member, sat at the opposite end of the long directors' table. He put his hands in his pockets and smiled a little, as he tilted his chair on two legs; but he said nothing.

"Things look black, I admit," volunteered the Reverend James Macassar, stroking his smooth, distinguished chin; "but we must remember that it is always darkest just before dawn."

"Yes," returned Mr. Towns, the lawyer; "but

who is to say when it is as dark as it is going to be?"

At length Dilke rose. "I have something of importance to communicate to the Board," he remarked. "What view you will take of it I don't know. Of course we are in an awkward situation. We were fools to make ourselves liable. For my part, I am sorry that we ever embarked on the enterprise, though I do not deny that the library promises to be a great help to the town."

"All very true, Doctor Dilke," interrupted the president dryly, "but scarcely news to the members of the Board."

"No, that part of it is no news to any of us," Dilke went on. "It is what I am coming to that is new. I have in my pocket an offer of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars for the benefit of this library."

A stunned silence fell upon the group of men.

"Just before dawn!" repeated Doctor Macassar at length, smiling gently but triumphantly across the table at Mr. Towns.

"What did you mean, Doctor Dilke," the lawyer cross-questioned, "by saying that you did not know what view we would take of this offer? What view is there to take of it except as the luckiest thing that ever happened to save a sinking ship?"

"Let us say rather a direct interposition of Providence to assist a noble cause!" corrected Doctor Macassar.

"Well," Dilke answered, fingering his watch chain, "if that is so, all I can say is that Providence uses queer instruments sometimes. The man who offers this money is Jacob Secor."

Jacob Secor! The silence fell again deeper than ever. Each man looked at his neighbour. No one wished to be the first to speak.

"The money was made in the liquor business," said Mr. Cantor, the president of the Board, who was also president of the Pieria Temperance Union.

"I don't care about *that*," Dilke protested. "The liquor business is as good as any other if it is honestly conducted."

"Yes, *if*," commented Mr. Towns. "The trouble is that nothing Jake Secor had a hand in was ever run honestly. He cheated me out of my fee when I defended him on a charge of abetting an illicit whiskey still in Kentucky."

"Rare sport to see an engineer hoist with his own petard!" murmured Dilke, and added aloud: "That is what I meant by saying that I did not know what you would think of it. Secor writes to me as secretary that he knows he has some enemies in town, and that hard things have been said of him; but he bears no malice."

"Oh, doesn't he!" growled Mr. Towns.

"No. He says that he always felt kindly toward Pieria, and hearing that the library was in trouble, he would like to lend a helping hand. He attaches a condition, however. The library must be named for him, 'The Jacob Penhallow Secor Library.'"

At the last suggestion the tide of indignation swelled so high as almost to overwhelm the Board—a confused volley of wrathful exclamations poured out.

"The impudent scoundrell!"

"It is not to be thought of!"

"Nothing less than insulting!"

The president sat back and said nothing.

"Of course," Dilke explained, "we are individually liable, and if we do not accept this money we must pay it out of our own pockets."

Doctor Macassar buttoned his clerical coat more closely, as if with a certain satisfaction that it had no pockets available.

"After all," asked the president smoothly, "are we not assuming too hastily that the matter cannot be satisfactorily arranged? It has difficulties—I admit it has difficulties; but is it not possible to separate the gift from the giver? Secor will die some day; but his money will live on. Is it not better that it should be doing good than harm—perhaps engaged in carrying

on this very liquor traffic which is sapping the moral and physical strength of the country?"

"I don't understand, Mr. President, that this is a temperance meeting," opposed Dilke with rising temper.

"Every meeting should be a temperance meeting," answered Mr. Cantor, now fairly mounted on his favourite hobby. "Intemperance is the crying evil of our time. There is an old legend that Jehovah planted the vine and watered it, first with the blood of the lamb, afterward, when it was grown, with the blood of the ape, then with that of the lion, and finally with that of the swine, symbolising the progressive effect of drinking upon man."

"Apparently," suggested Dilke, "there is no objection then to the first drink."

"A dangerous doctrine, young man—a very dangerous doctrine."

"This is no place," interrupted Dilke, "for discussion of that question. Some of us believe in the liquor business, some of us do not; but I suppose we are all agreed on liking an honest man and money honestly come by."

"The next generation will not know anything about Secor," observed the practical Mr. Towns. "He has not been in Pieria for ten years, and probably will not be here for ten years to come. He will never trouble us, and the

children who are growing up have never heard his name."

"I think," said Doctor Macassar, who was an apostle of compromise, "that our president has put this case very happily in saying that we may in some sense separate the gift from the giver. If we take the money we may hope to obliterate its stain by a consecration to new and higher ends. We must not forget, gentlemen, the history of the foundation of the great English universities, how they drew their support from plunder and injustice, yet have risen to be held the chief glory of the most enlightened nation of the earth."

A low murmur of applause greeted this burst of eloquence. But Dilke rose with an obstinate flush on his cheek. "This is all fine talk, gentlemen," he blurted out, "and I wanted to see what you would say. For my part, I cannot see my way beyond the fact that Secor is an infernal scoundrel."

"Do *you* wish to pay the money?"

"No, Mr. Cantor; but I will pay my share rather than take this man's money. You may salve over the matter as you like. The fact remains that accepting Secor's money is equivalent to indorsing him. That is the plain English of the situation. I care as much about this library as any of you, but I would rather see

the work stopped than to have it proceed on this basis."

Dilke sat down. An uncomfortable pause followed. Then the apostle of compromise rose and began conciliatingly: "I see Doctor Dilke's point of view, and it does him great credit, *great* credit; but it is not alone a question of discharging our present liabilities. A quarter of a million dollars under the control of this library would supply an intellectual awakening to the town. It would build a lecture hall, supply lecturers and concerts, make a nucleus for the higher spiritual activities. There is no end to its possible benefits. Are we lightly to throw all this away?"

"We might call a town meeting and put it to vote," suggested Mr. Towns.

"That I fear is impracticable," the president remarked, "for to make the people understand the issue, too many unpleasant explanations must be made."

"Very true, Mr. President, *very* true," assented the apostle. "If I might make a suggestion, I would propose writing to Mr. Secor that we appreciate his offer and will accept it in the name of the people of this town; but that his suggestion of naming the institution the Jacob Penhallow Secor Library is not, in our judgment, advisable. That, however, we are

willing to compromise on calling it the Secor Library; the Secors being, as you all know, an old and respected family in this vicinity."

This solution met with approval. Smiles reigned all about the table. The motion was put to vote and carried with only one dissenting voice.

When the result was announced Dilke rose and took his hat. His face was very red and he seemed with difficulty to be suppressing a passionate outburst. "I wish," he said, controlling his voice as well as he could, "to offer my resignation both as secretary and trustee. To-morrow I will put it in writing." Then he went out. Mr. Towns was appointed secretary in his place and the meeting adjourned.

Dilke went directly home and found his mother sewing in the little green sitting room. He went in and walked up and down, with head bent and hands in his pockets. Mrs. Dilke, a gentle little woman whose purple eyes shone from under her white hair like violets under a snow-bank, watched him and wondered at his restlessness; but he did not feel inclined to talk. He wished to arrange his statement of the case and settle matters with himself first. The truth is that with Dilke, as with most men, a mother had a dual identity, the practical half of which was concerned with the mending of his clothes,

the superintendence of his meals and the general charge of his bodily welfare; while the other and spiritual half was enshrined with the family Bible, to be held in immense tenderness and reverence, but not too often consulted for advice.

Mothers, however, do not always accept this reverential shelving as they should, but manifest an untoward desire to mingle in their sons' mundane and masculine affairs. It is then that they become irritating, and their worshipful sons mutter the ominous word "Meddling."

Mrs. Dilke watched Anthony wandering about the room till her nerves and her curiosity were strained to the breaking point.

"What is the matter, Tony?" she asked. "Did anything go wrong at the meeting of the Library Board this afternoon?"

"Yes," her son answered abruptly, "the whole Board went wrong. I told them so, but they would not believe me. So I resigned."

"Tony!"

"I did. It was the only thing that I could do."

Mrs. Dilke sat looking with misgiving in her heart, at the determined face opposite her.

"You must not forget, Tony, that you are the youngest member of the Board, and a great compliment it was, your being elected. If all

the others were against you, perhaps it was you who were wrong."

"You don't know anything about it, Mother."

"No. How can I, when I have not been told?"

"It was the Board's business, not mine. I did not think it right to tell anyone till I had submitted the case officially. Jake Secor has offered a quarter of a million dollars to the library."

"Oh, I am so glad! What a load that must take off your mind!"

"I voted not to accept it."

"But Tony——"

"There are no buts in the case, Mother. He is a scoundrel and the library has no right to take his money."

"Surely you needn't have resigned?"

"There is no use in discussing the matter, Mother. If you don't see it you never would."

"I am afraid it will set the town against you."

This voicing of a feeling which had been rankling in Dilke's own mind gave bitterness to his tone as he answered:

"I suppose if a man sees what is right he is bound to do it and take the consequences, is he not?"

"Of course," faltered Mrs. Dilke.

"Then that ends the question," her son

replied, and turning on his heel, was leaving the room when his mother followed him quickly, and put her arm softly about his neck.

"Even if it was a mistake, I am glad, Tony, that you did what you thought right—and remember, whatever comes, I am on your side against the world."

Dilke lifted his head. He went out feeling that, come what would, there was a love which nothing could chill or weaken, a pride in him which nothing could shake, and a confident conviction of his ultimate justification.

Much rejoicing was in Pieria when the good fortune which had befallen the town became known. Little thought was given to the source of the contribution. If a few shook their heads it was in secret, and with the alleviating thought that a man lost to sight for ten years was practically dead, and to the dead, especially the rich and lavish dead, much might be pardoned.

The library and the new hall went on to a glorious completion, and everyone but Anthony Dilke was content.

The trustees congratulated themselves on their wisdom. They were prudent souls, however, and wishing to avoid complications, they decided to place the dedication ceremonies in May, when they learned that it was Mr. Secor's intention to go abroad on a business trip.

The day for the dedication of the new library dawned, fair as spring and sunshine could make it. Great were the preparations for the celebration. The brass band had new uniforms; the mayor and the president of the library association were to head the procession starting from the town hall. They were to be followed by the library trustees, and they in turn by prominent citizens, the Temperance Union, and a band of young women in white representing the Christian Endeavor Society. The self-conscious little houses along the route smirked in flags and flowers, the townsfolk crowded the sidewalks or hurried to secure their places in the hall.

Among them was Anthony Dilke, who had felt that he could not refuse his mother's earnest request that he would accompany her. Moreover, he was moved by a cynical curiosity to see how the chief actors in this little drama would conduct themselves in what he regarded as a trying situation. He was conscious that he stood alone in this view of it. Everyone else was in holiday spirits as well as in holiday attire. The bells rang gaily from the steeple, the banners waved, the sun shone.

Could anything darken the glory of such a halcyon occasion?

Yes, one thing had the power; and that one

thing happened. The unexpected arrived, and the unexpected was Mr. Jacob Penhallow Secor, who presented himself unannounced, explaining to the president that he had decided at the last moment to postpone his European trip in favour of a visit to Pieria.

After all, what more natural than that the prime mover in all this festivity, the man whose generosity had been the cause of all these rejoicings, should wish to witness the fair fruits of his bounty! Why had no one foreseen the probability, and why were mayor and aldermen, and, above all, the trustees of the Secor Library, thrown into such consternation by the appearance of their benefactor?

At any rate, here he was, and the question, the pressing question, was, what to do with him?

Clearly, he must walk in the procession and in the front rank. Accordingly it was decreed that the mayor should head the procession, walking alone, while following him should walk Mr. Cantor, president of the board of trustees of the Secor Library, president of the Pieria Temperance Union and secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association, arm in arm with Mr. Jacob Penhallow Secor, president of the State and Territory Whiskey Trust.

Mr. Cantor made a wry face; but it could not

be avoided. When we have started on a dubious journey we cannot choose our own companions.

Even more awkwardly placed was Doctor Macassar. To him had fallen the honour of making the opening address. He was to give an account of the founding of the library, describing the benefaction and omitting all praise of the benefactor. Now that benefactor was to be present, to be listening.

Really it *was* awkward for the apostle of compromise.

Meanwhile no one could be more unconcerned than the cause of all this perplexity. Satisfaction with himself and the world shone forth from his face as he stalked along, the observed of all observers. He had always said that money could do anything. Now he knew it. The good opinion of his fellow-townsmen had been long withheld, but it was his at last, bought with hard cash. As he glanced up at the large, deep-cut name of the Secor Library, he reflected with cynical satisfaction that critical mouths were shut at last, though it had taken a quarter of a million dollars to do it.

He saw the little boys climbing the electric-light poles to catch a glimpse of the hero of the day.

"That's him, that's Secor!" he heard one urchin say to another, and the other replied:

"He owns the town to-day, sure enough." One of the boys was Ned Cantor and the other Tommy Towns.

On the whole, Secor felt that he had made a good investment. As he passed into the hall he nodded patronisingly at Mr. Towns, who returned the nod sourly. The lawyer would have liked to administer the cut direct; but had he not taken this man's money?

Mr. Towns had been assigned to speak second on the programme, and he had prepared a talk addressed principally to the young men, showing them for what a library stood, what high ideals literature inculcated, and how the bulwarks of the state were "not high-raised battlements, but men." This opening was to be followed by a discourse on the ideal citizen, on honesty and civic righteousness, which were to be painted in glowing colours and the corresponding vices to be set forth in lurid opposition. Now Jacob Secor had appeared to spoil it all. Every word would be an insult to the guest of honour. Speak of civic virtue before a man who had bribed legislatures! Talk of business uprightness in the face of one whom every person in that audience knew for a fraud and a trickster!

Even a lawyer could not face that situation. He thought with relief that the brunt of allusion to Secor must fall on Doctor Macassar, and he

might have time at least to rearrange his ideas. Fancy then his dismay when the apostle of compromise ended his somewhat wandering and ineffective address with these words:

"I leave to the speaker who follows me," indicating Mr. Towns with a wave of his hand, "the pleasing task of saying a word of welcome to the guest of honour, the son so long absent from his native town, the giver of this noble, this magnificent monument."

Amid wild applause Mr. Towns rose. He began lamely with a bow toward the chair occupied by Mr. Jacob Secor.

"The debt we owe—The debt we owe." Twice he essayed and twice turned back in dread. "The fact is," he said at length, "that I must beg the indulgence of the audience if my words are halting and few. This library has meant so much to me that now, as I look around upon its completion, I find my heart too full for utterance and I must leave it to His Honour, the Mayor, who accepts the library in the name of Pieria, to speak of our feelings toward the founder."

With wrath in his heart, but smiles on his lips, His Honour, the Mayor of Pieria, took up the word. "I, too," he said, "find it hard to express in adequate language our thanks for the great gift which we have received. It will be a

source of benefit to hundreds yet unborn—yet unborn—and thousands—yes, thousands—will look back to the Secor Library as the influence which helped to mould their lives. The giver of this splendid benefaction is with us to-day. It is needless to introduce him to this audience. Himself a son of Pieria, he is already known to many among you.”

“Too well by half!” muttered Mr. Towns.

“His character”—here the Mayor seemed to suffer from some obstruction in his throat, but went on bravely—“his character speaks for itself.”

“I should say it did!” Doctor Dilke whispered to his mother.

“His generosity will be proclaimed as long as this library stands!” Then turning, with relief at a successfully accomplished and difficult task, he added impressively, “In the name of Pieria, I thank you, Mr. Secor!”

Jacob Secor rose and seemed to be trembling on the verge of a speech.

The trustees moved uneasily in their seats. One or two youths in a front seat gave a ribald chuckle, as if they enjoyed the discomfiture of the dignitaries.

But the presiding officer met the situation effectively. Appearing not to observe Mr. Secor's intention, he hastily announced the singing of

the anthem by the Temperance Union and the Christian Endeavor young ladies assisted by the church choir.

The anthem, though it was sung to the tune of "Integer Vitæ," relieved the tension somewhat, and everyone breathed more freely when the white-haired pastor emeritus of the First Church rose to deliver the benediction.

"O Lord," he prayed, "dismiss us with Thy blessing! Bless to us our successes and our failures, our virtues and our sins! May we learn from them all and may we in the final account be judged by the *best* things we have done!"

"The old man saved the day," remarked Dilke to his mother, as they went out from the hall. "But I am glad that I was not obliged to walk in that procession. I have not altered my opinion that Pieria has paid too high a price for her library."

Dilke, however, was soon made to realise that the affair did not end with his failure to walk in the procession. He had given offence to the most prominent men in town, and they made their resentment felt.

Personal popularity is a great factor in a physician's success, and Dilke speedily began to perceive that his was waning. The Reverend James Macassar urged the members of his congregation to employ a rival doctor. Mr. Cantor

failed to call in Dilke when his wife was ill. Rumour began to say that Dilke's treatment was unsound, a report as fatal in medicine as in theology.

Before the year was out Dilke realised that there was no future for him in Pieria. His mother perceived his growing discouragement, and one day she said to him softly: "Never mind, Tony; Pieria is not the world. Go away and try somewhere else."

"Why, Mother, you have been counting the years while I was away, and you know that your dearest wish has been that I should succeed to my father's practice here."

"My dearest wish is that you should succeed somewhere."

"Would you go, too?"

His mother shook her head.

"No," she said, "I will stay here and wait for you."

Dilke was quite ashamed at the thrill of pleasurable excitement which shook his frame.

"I believe that you have hit upon the right scheme, Mother. You always do." (It is wonderful what intelligence we see in advice which chimes with our own wishes.) "I will go to New York—the greater the place the greater the chance."

A month later Dilke set off with a heart much

lighter than that of the mother who watched him from her window. The non-combatants of life bear the heaviest burden.

With all his anxiety for the future, there lay in Dilke's mind a cheerful confidence in ultimate success, combined with a subtle satisfaction in the thought that he was a martyr to principle. No hero, this Anthony Dilke! Only a self-confident and masterful young fellow starting out into the world with a buoyant determination to smite the devil wherever he might meet him, little suspecting that the battlefield would be his own soul, and that the devil would sometimes get the better of the encounter.

CHAPTER III

THAT NOT IMPOSSIBLE SHE

LIVES approach each other so subtly and so suddenly that the stranger of to-day may become the soul-compelling force of to-morrow. Fate had decreed that Joyce Eldridge should be a coming power in Anthony Dilke's life, though as yet he had never heard her name nor dreamed of her existence. She was a daughter of a New York banker living in one of the old wide-windowed houses on Washington Square.

Many times in the course of Dilke's first months in New York his way led him past her door, yet nothing moved him to note the number or glance at the window as he passed. None the less, destiny was weaving its web about him and leading his unconscious feet.

One winter afternoon, when the snowflakes were falling thickly outside and spreading a magic carpet over the little square in front of the house, Miss Eldridge stood before her long mirror while her maid arranged the folds of her sable-trimmed white gown, and adjusted the drooping plumes of her large hat.

As the clock on the mantel struck five, she glanced out of the window at the waiting carriage below.

Joyce Eldridge was the youngest child of an ill-assorted marriage. Her mother had been a descendant of the old Huguenots who settled here and there along the banks of the Hudson, while the Dutch were bartering for furs and diking swamps in Manhattan. It was an aristocratic blood, a blood with traditions, a blood which had preferred poverty to trade, and had achieved its preferences.

A daughter of the fifth generation found the achievement of aristocratic poverty distasteful, and wedded a prosperous New York banker, himself a descendant of the British middle class, with the prejudices and the integrity of his ancestors. She was a creature of whims and moods, of delicate fancy and a tendency to treat life lightly, turning it in her hands like a vase of Venetian glass to enjoy the colours.

Yet to her natural gaiety she united a temperamental timidity. "A large discourse of imaginative fears" made her tremble before her husband's blunt speech and irascible temper. Her inheritance was one of courtesy, of regard for the little amenities of life, and she found it difficult to adapt herself to an atmosphere where they were ignored.

Mr. Eldridge, all unconsciously to himself, was constantly wounding this "pleasing, anxious being," and while he would have made any sacrifice for her, he could not or would not control the temper, which, like all uncurbed faults, grew steadily in its mastery over him.

Naturally friction resulted, a friction which left his stalwart love for her unharmed, but which lessened hers for him till it became a thing of shadowy forms and regrets for what might have been, while all her caressing affection was reserved for her children.

Mrs. Eldridge had died when Joyce was only twelve years old; but she still survived in her daughter, who to a natural inheritance of character had added the conscious imitation of those they love, which children early learn.

Joyce's strict sense of duty was the only inheritance of character which she owed to her father, and she employed it strictly in his behalf, though this was not always easy. The same irascibility which had estranged his wife threatened the loyalty of his daughter. He had always a gift for making wretched the people whom he loved best.

Mr. Eldridge's ideal of a daughter was a mediæval châtelaine who went about with keys at her belt, distributing supplies and making herself personally responsible for every detail

of the household, while Joyce would have dined on lentils and slept on a board, if only she might have had gaiety of heart and a circle of agreeable people about her.

"Joyce!"

The sound of her father's tones calling from the landing below startled the girl from a train of thought which had left her gazing into the mirror for several minutes with unseeing eyes.

"Yes, Papa," she responded, picking up her gloves and card case, and running quickly down the stairs.

Mr. Eldridge was standing by the window in the library, and as Joyce entered she perceived that she was drawing near a storm centre.

"I am going to a reception. Do you want me?" she asked, buttoning her left glove nervously.

"I want *someone*; I have rung twice, but no one answers."

"I am sorry—I'm afraid it is my fault. I sent James on an errand; Caroline was with me, and Sarah—I don't know where Sarah is."

"And yet you call yourself the mistress of this house."

Joyce tightened her lips, but her voice was steady as she asked, ignoring the challenge in her father's tone: "Is there anything that you need?"

"Ink!" exclaimed Mr. Eldridge with resentful brevity.

"I will find it for you," Joyce responded, with more assurance in her voice than in her heart.

She searched the table and the mantel and the desk. There was no ink visible.

"Perhaps Sarah put it into the closet," Joyce ventured at last, conscious of an ominous paternal silence.

"Does Sarah expect people to write in the closet?" Mr. Eldridge inquired, as incisively as if his tongue had been coated with barbed wire. Clearly this was one of those rhetorical questions which call for no direct reply. His daughter wisely attempted none; but burrowed in the closet under various piles of paper until she found what she sought and finally emerged somewhat flushed, but holding aloft in triumph a heavy bronze inkstand.

The triumph was short lived, however, for her father's next demand was for pens, and Joyce was obliged to confess that they had all been swept into the waste basket and not replaced.

Mr. Eldridge strode up and down in silent fury.

"It does seem," he observed at length, apparently to the bookcases, since he never looked at Joyce—"it does seem as if a man might expect to find writing materials on his desk. One

would think that a girl with nothing else to do all day might see that the maids keep one room in habitable order."

He went to the bell and rang it violently.

"Here, James!" he exclaimed, holding out a bill as the belated butler entered, "go to the stationer's and buy me a hundred pens—a *hundred*, mind! Then perhaps I may find one when I want it."

Joyce crept silently out of the room, anxious to escape before another thundercloud burst. At the head of the stairs she met her brother coming in from his office, and bounding lightly up the stairs, taking two steps at a time. Henry Eldridge was a youthful repetition of the paternal type. His resemblance to his father was so strong that men sometimes stopped him on the street to ask if he were not the son of Mr. Eldridge, the banker; but the younger face was as much pleasanter than the older one as smiles are more attractive than frowns and a smooth skin than a wrinkled one.

Yet the nature underneath was not unlike. In both there was the same obtuseness, the same obstinacy, only masked in Henry's case by a good humour, born of youth and animal spirits. He was well, he was strong, he was happy. Why should anyone go about complaining? Smile at the world and the world will smile at you.

That was *his* motto, as he frequently announced with a certain finality, as if the fact that it was his were equivalent to saying that it was the best imaginable.

The thing which tried his amiability most was the constant jarring between Joyce and his father. He was on good terms with both. Why could they not agree with each other? Of course his father scolded and domineered on all occasions, but, on the other hand, Joyce pampered her nerves too much, and made a mountain out of a mole hill. A little tact on her part would keep everything running smoothly.

Nothing is easier than the judicial attitude of mind which condemns equally both parties to a quarrel, without taking the trouble to investigate the rights of either. Besides, it must in justice be said that Mr. Eldridge's outbursts of temper were mere pin pricks to Henry's healthy nerves, and he could not, in his obtuseness, conceive them as rankling like barbed arrows in his sister's sensitive soul.

When he saw her standing at the head of the stairs he knew by her drooping attitude that something was wrong, and he was not disposed to be sympathetic. He was tired. He wanted his bath and his cigar. If women must indulge their feelings, why could they not do it in the morning, when men were at work?

However, he greeted Joyce kindly enough. "What's the matter now?" he asked.

"The same old story!" exclaimed his sister despondently, throwing out both hands. "Everything is wrong and I am responsible."

"Why do you care? You know that father doesn't mean what he says. You make too much of every little thing."

"Now, Henry!" expostulated his sister, thoroughly aroused, "it is very easy for you to look on and say 'don't mind'; but suppose that father came down to your office and found fault with you——"

"I should take the next train to San Francisco."

"That is what it is to be a man."

"It has its advantages," Henry said, in the tone of indulgent superiority with which a capitalist might address a labourer, or a white man a Negro; "but I thought that women liked being lectured and ordered about. They do in books."

"I don't know anything about women in books," Joyce answered, "but I know one girl in real life who does not like it in the least."

The easy expression of sympathy is a feminine gift. A man—especially a young man—feels as inadequate before it as if he were set to mend gloves or darn stockings.

Henry looked at Joyce with the clumsy sympathy of a dumb animal. As they stood thus facing each other they were a curious illustration of the possibilities of opposite inheritance from the same blood. Henry was a type of boisterous burliness. His good looks were due to his ruddy colouring and the frank outlook of honest eyes; his sister's every line and delicate curve told of controlled sensitiveness. Her beauty came and went like the colour in her cheeks. Her chestnut hair fell softly over the pencilled aristocracy of her eyebrows, and her features were cut with precision, as if worked in a cameo. Some people called the face cold; but they were not those who knew it best.

Strangers found it hard to believe that there could be both warmth and tenderness in the eyes which seemed to look out on the world around with a cool aloofness as of a traveller and an alien. There was a light mockery in the eyes, as they turned now upon the figure of the man standing awkwardly before her.

"Do not try to be sympathetic, Henry. You really cannot achieve it. Only tell me if my hat is straight, and if my gloves have suffered from groping for an inkstand on the closet floor."

"You are all right. You do look lovely, Joyce, and that's a fact," her brother answered

with enthusiasm, much relieved to be able to return to a lighter vein, wherein he felt himself more at home.

"Thank you, Henry. Flattery is very sustaining."

"By the way, where are you going?"

"I have half a dozen teas on my list; but I have given them up on account of the storm. I shall go only to a reception at Mrs. Adrian Gregory's. I wish that you would go with me."

"Don't ask me, Joyce—I couldn't. I might form the habit of teas——"

"It would do you good——"

"By no means. After business hours I intend to be amused, and I don't find teas amusing. With a woman it is different. You go to show your fine clothes and to see other people's."

"Partly," Joyce answered, "and partly to get new outlooks—'to touch and go, and sip the foam of many lives'; but I could not make you understand. Good-bye."

With a smile curving like an inverted rainbow behind the half-dried tears in her eyes, Joyce went down the stairs, leaving her brother looking after her from above.

"It is hard on Joyce," Henry said to himself. "I think I must have it out with father, myself, some day"; a resolution which to Henry's mind was as serious as if he had determined to enter

the cage of a lion and hold a personal interview behind the bars. He pondered long on the risks involved.

Meanwhile the Eldridge carriage wheeled into the avenue, and joined the procession of vehicles which moved so slowly as to suggest a festive funeral march. The girl looked out through the window at the passers-by, the pedestrians beating their way against the snow-laden wind, and the women in carriages wrapped in furs. She strove to occupy her attention with the passing show; but all the while her thoughts were going over the interview with her father which had fallen into her cheerful day like a thunderbolt, and left electricity still charging the air.

It is not the first family difference, but the hundredth, which tells on the nerves, and produces the effect with which a repeated discord exasperates the ear.

Joyce's sense of irritation grew stronger instead of diminishing, and her nervous tension showed itself in the tightening grasp of her card case, which was bent nearly double in her unconscious clasp. It was perhaps natural that her father's petulance rather than her own carelessness should have been most insistent in the girl's mind.

Responsibility, thrust too early on youthful

shoulders, produces either premature gravity or rebellion of spirit. With Joyce it was the latter, and the flush on her cheeks bespoke many things which her lips left unuttered.

When she reached Mrs. Gregory's house she found the rooms crowded and the scent of roses heavy in the air, while talkers and musicians were apparently engaged in a strenuous competition of noise making.

After greeting her hostess, Joyce drifted with the throng which was streaming with naïve eagerness toward the refreshment room and away from the person whom the visitors were supposed to have come to meet. Before she had traversed half the distance her voice was weary and her brain exhausted from the exchange of shouted commonplaces. She smiled to herself at the emphasis with which people put questions without taking time to listen to her replies—without even fixing their eyes upon her as they spoke—and at the cordiality of greeting from several, who turned while she was still within hearing to ask her name.

Wherever she moved glances turned toward the slender figure in white, and comments followed her like foam in the wake of a yacht.

"Is she not beautiful?" a man exclaimed to a woman near him. His companion shrugged her shoulders.

"Not what *I* call beautiful," she answered; "and her hair looks as if she had done it herself."

"Oh!" the man responded, not daring to commit himself by asking what was so fatal to beauty in domestic hairdressing; but turning for another look at the person whom he was not to admire.

Meanwhile Joyce was uncomfortably conscious that the effect of high-pitched conversation had developed a distinct ache in her throat. She disentangled herself from a group which had gathered about her, and withdrew to a curtained corner of the drawing room, near enough to the hostess to insure seclusion.

For some time she stood looking with only half-seeing eyes at the swaying crowd around her. Then suddenly she began to feel as if she were swaying, too. The interview with her father had been more of a strain than she realised, and, as usual with nervous temperaments, the reaction was the more complete for being delayed by an exertion of the will. The electric lights seemed to grow to moons before her eyes, the scent of the flowers became sickeningly strong—she looked about her for a chair or lounge, but the room had been cleared to leave as much space as possible. There might have been a label over the door, "Standing room only."

While Joyce was looking around in dazed indecision, her eyes met those of a man who stood near her, surveying the people about with the detached air of a stranger. He was a strikingly handsome man—his figure was well knit, his head finely formed. The features were inharmonious, the broad forehead and narrow chin contrasting as oddly as the proud eyes and sensitive mouth. The whole face was marked by many contradictions, but bore the impress of dynamic power. As his glance fell upon Joyce he moved toward her and said: "You are faint; you need to get out into the fresh air. I will make a way through the crowd, if you are able to follow."

Joyce nodded. She remembered afterward her sense of gratitude that he did not put anything as a question, for she felt her complete inability to speak. She could only move uncertainly in the wake of the broad-shouldered figure before her. As she reached the hall door the cold air revived her at once; but her companion stood by her side for a minute in silence before he said:

"Do you wish to go home? May I call your carriage?"

"Thank you," Joyce answered; "you are very kind. Yes, I wish to go home. Will you please speak to my footman—the one in brown

holding a fur cape—and tell him that I am ready?”

Joyce's mind was still confused, and she was compelled to force her lips to consecutive speech. It did not occur to her to give her name, nor to Dilke (for it was Dilke) to ask it. As she spoke he ran down the steps to the row of liveried figures, who stood immovable as an avenue of sphinxes before an Egyptian temple. When he found the man in brown with the fur cape, he realised for the first time the awkwardness of not knowing the name of the lady whom he was trying to assist. His first instinct was to seize the cape, for he knew that its owner should not stand in the wind without it; but he was aware that his action might rouse not unreasonable suspicions, so he said: “Your mistress wishes her carriage at once. She is waiting at the door. Take her the wrap and call the carriage directly.”

As Dilke rejoined her at the head of the steps Miss Eldridge noticed that he was without hat or coat, and that the wind was cold. His face and figure were still a blur before her bewildered sight; but she realised that he might be suffering some risk from this exposure.

“Please don't wait for me!” she exclaimed. “There is nothing more that you can do. I am immensely obliged.”

Dilke made no immediate response to her

words. He stood looking at her with a glance too steadily scrutinising to be admiring, too professional for any suggestion of impertinence.

"Are you sure that you feel well enough to go home alone?" Dilke questioned.

"Oh, quite! I should not even fear going back into the drawing room."

"I advise you not to try the experiment, and your carriage is here."

Dilke followed her down the steps and handed her into the carriage. He lingered an instant, half unconsciously hoping to hear the address; but she said only "Home!" and straightway was whirled from his vision and as completely lost as if they had been on separating ships.

Dilke returned to the house, and, after securing his hat and coat and extricating himself from the crush on the stairway, came out into the street again. As he bent his head to meet the snowy blasts a new exhilaration took the place of the discouragement which had beset him during the past weeks of loneliness and lack of success.

This chance encounter with a passing stranger had wrought a change in him. The world seemed more real to him because this girl was in it. The touch of her fingers on his, as he handed her into the carriage, still lingered like an

imminent presence with a warm and human significance.

Even strangers, it seemed, might be something to each other. It was not so much the passing vision of a charming woman which had warmed Dilke's heart, though he was of an age when that alone might have raised his drooping spirits; it was rather that she typified to his mind a possible friendliness, a possible need for him in a world which had seemed till now oblivious of his existence and impermeable to his influence.

There are moments in our lives when trivial happenings are charged with an importance out of proportion to their superficial value, as if they were straws trembling before the coming wind of destiny.

CHAPTER IV

A DEBTOR TO HIS PROFESSION

"THE greater the place the greater the success——" yes, and the greater the failure also.

Anthony Dilke walked up and down in his office in New York. His head was bent, and from time to time he twisted the ends of his moustache into his mouth.

"Hard luck!" he muttered.

And hard luck indeed it was. Here was a man of promise, educated in the best medical schools, who now, at thirty, almost the term of average mortal life, found himself without a patient. He tried to keep up his mother's courage, but his own was ebbing fast. He found a certain grim amusement in his mother's warnings against overwork.

Moreover, other troubles than those of poverty harassed Dilke's soul. To draw upon his mother's slender income would be impossible. To disappoint her assurance of his success, to have Pieria know that he had failed, would be gall and wormwood to his pride.

In a great city one is merged in a crowd in-

different to individual success or failure; but not so in a town where everyone knows the affairs of everyone else, and where an ever-open eye and ear glean every detail of a fellow-townsmen's career.

To fail, Dilke felt, was to disappoint his friends and gratify his enemies. Failure was the one thing which he had never contemplated when he left Pieria, and he would not admit for an instant that he had shaken the dust of that town off his feet only to wear it on his head, with an admixture of ashes as a sign of penitence for his boldness. Should he bow the knee to Secor, ask aid of Cantor, confess to Towns that New York would have none of him and that he must come back to Pieria to subsist on humble pie? No! Anything was better than that—anything; but precisely what? That was the question which was preying upon him like a vampire.

He had invested his last thousand dollars in an office on a busy New York thoroughfare, hoping that some lucky accident might throw practice in his way; but all in vain. Automobiles whirled by in safety. Horses picked their way down the slippery asphalt hill without a fall. Pedestrians skated along on icy days, when one might look at any instant for a broken limb, and still nothing happened. It was an

outrageously well-conditioned world in which Dilke's lot was cast.

His office boy strove to encourage him by reports of visitors who called while he was out and refused to leave their names. Richard had a precocious eye and a backward forehead. He was an expert at the long bow and capable of enormous fabrications.

For some time, in spite of making requisite deductions, Dilke had been cheered by the shadowy procession of hypothetical visitors, but at last he was driven to admit that neither office nor office boy was advancing him an inch toward the desired goal of a lucrative practice.

Evidently there was no career open to talent in this great city, without clues, and Dilke had none—unless one counted as such the cards to a reception like the one of yesterday.

Dilke remembered with a certain bitterness the loneliness which had fallen upon him like a leaden weight as he looked about on the unfamiliar faces, so animated, so full of eagerness for each other, so blankly unseeing when turned toward himself; and then that swaying white figure—it haunted him still. He had been conscious of a sense of attraction as if like had drawn near like. Here was someone who might have come into his life, and instead she had disappeared like a summer mist. It was the old story

of "no clues." Even Theseus could not find his way through the labyrinth without them.

Clues, substantial clues, had indeed been offered; but they had come from such a source that Dilke's pride forbade his acceptance of them. They were proffered by Eustace Brandyce. Only a week ago Dilke had received a letter from that wanderer, saying that he had heard through Newbold of Dilke's change of base, and knowing from experience how hard it was to get on in a new place, it would give him pleasure to send a note of introduction to relatives of his own, people rather influential in New York, if Dilke cared to know them. The letter went on to say that he, Brandyce, happened to be in funds just now, and that if Dilke found himself straitened he had only to ask for some money, which he could repay whenever it was convenient.

The letter was lying open upon the desk, which stood in one corner of the long and narrow office. Each time that Dilke passed the desk his eye fell upon it. Each time, however, he shook his head. No, whatever happened, there should be no further indebtedness there. In all his dreams it had been he who did some great service to Brandyce, and it seemed the irony of fate that the case should be reversed. It was kind in

Brandyce. He admitted that it was kind; but acceptance was not to be thought of.

As he strode up and down his barren office this afternoon, the future looked very black and the present even blacker. Something must be done to make both ends meet. Alas! there was no surgical operation which would accomplish that feat. He must attract the attention of the public. But how?

The question found no answer in his mind, and he seated himself wearily at his desk. Thrusting Brandyce's letter hastily into a drawer, he drew toward him a pile of manuscript which represented an article that he was preparing for a radical magazine. It was entitled "The Development of the Human Conscience."

Dilke had begun it in bitterness of spirit, and had taken a savage satisfaction in showing conscience as the most cunning device of fate for the torture of humanity. He had made a study of the history of the early Church, its martyrs and its self-tormentors, its hair shirts, its fastings and scourgings. The supreme inutility of these sacrifices weighed upon him as he wrote. It seemed like a breath of fresh air to turn back to the Greek view of life, to the pursuit of happiness as a rational end, and to the glorification of the human body. What would the world be to-day if its minds were cased in perfectly

developed bodies tingling with the joy of existence! What a liberator would he be who could set free the morbid conscience and the afflicted soul, by sending the blood in a red flow of health through the anæmic brain! There, in the renewal of the physical basis of life, lay the foundation of the new morality, the new philosophy, the new religion.

The theory of the mind's control over the body had been pushed to a grotesque absurdity. It was time the world recognised that it was not only a fallacy, but a direct reversal of the true principle. Who should say that there was not an immense field open to science in studying sin from a purely materialistic standpoint? Not only mental but spiritual disorders might be directly benefited by creating the sound body, which alone the sound mind and soul would deign to inhabit.

As Dilke pondered on all this he began to think of himself as a pioneer in a new revival. Unformed theories, half humorous, half serious, floated through his mind as he dwelt upon the possibility that each spiritual defect had its bodily correlative, that lying was an astigmatism of the soul, that the homicidal tendency might be cured by relieving a pressure on some diseased point in the brain.

Subconsciously, too, he was thinking what

effect the promulgation of such a doctrine might have upon his own professional advancement. That was the weak point. The confusing of aims is the seed of sin.

Anthony Dilke was passing through an inward crisis full of danger. He had allowed himself to forget the oath of Hippocrates by which the ancient practitioner bound himself to enter his patient's house only to do him good, and to avoid the appearance of evil.

"After all," Dilke told himself of the scheme which his mind was rapidly revolving, "it would be only a breach of professional etiquette."

"Yes," whispered conscience, "but professional etiquette is the outer line of defenses, the citadel of which is professional ethics."

"It can do no harm. It may do good. It may do *me* good," Dilke persisted.

With this he pulled down a large square of pasteboard from the top of his desk and began to print on it. When the work was done he held it at arm's length and studied the result:

ANTHONY DILKE, M. D.
PAGAN HEALER.

Then without giving himself time to reflect, he opened the inner blinds and propped the

sign against the window. Hardly had he taken his seat at the desk again before the bell rang. Dilke started as if he had touched an electric battery. Here for days and weeks he had been listening with nerves in a state of ever-growing tension for that sound, and now that it had come his legs trembled so that he could scarcely cross the floor, and his hand fumbled for a full minute at the latch. He wished that the office boy were not out,

The door opened and a young man entered.

"Is Doctor Dilke at home?" he asked.

The question was as manna to Dilke's hungry soul.

"I am Doctor Dilke. Will you not walk in?" he answered, and pushed a chair forward. Then he turned to close the door, glad of a chance to calm the working of his face.

"I saw your sign in the window," the visitor began.

"Put up in the nick of time!" thought Dilke. "You have come to consult me about yourself?" he asked.

"No, oh no!" the young man replied. "I have no need for a physician."

"Then," exclaimed Dilke, his spirits sinking to zero, "perhaps you will be good enough to tell me why you have come to a doctor's office."

"Certainly—I was coming to that. I am a

reporter on *The Morning Glory*, and my business to-day was a column of 'Along the Way'—all the queer things which one sees or should see as one goes about. It has been an uncommonly dull day on the street, and I assure you it was a windfall for me when I saw your sign. So I looked in to inquire whether you would give me an interview."

Dilke hesitated. He realised that his conduct had been too impetuous. He should have waited to mature his scheme before putting up that sign; but it was too late to turn back now, and after all, here was the chance for publicity for which he had vainly longed.

"I should not care," he began hesitatingly, "to say much for publication at present, certainly not to go into details; but I have no objection to explaining briefly the fundamental principles of my practice."

"Fundamental principles"; the words sounded well and gave him courage to proceed as the reporter drew out his notebook.

"Have you been long engaged in the work?" his visitor asked.

"H'm! Not long, considering its extent and intricacy," Dilke answered.

"What is the work?"

"Keeping soul and body together!" exclaimed Dilke, then added hastily: "Reuniting the

physical and spiritual world on the only sound and sane basis—the basis of the perfect body. Not since the days of the Greeks has there been any adequate appreciation of the beauty of the sound body and that physical perfection from which alone mental perfection can take its rise. I do not refer to genius, which is a freak of nature, but to a rounded and complete mentality. I am a materialist, and I aim to study mental defects in the light of physical conditions. I regard mind as a function of matter.”

The visitor wrote rapidly for a few moments. Then he said, “Couldn’t you explain a little more clearly?”

Dilke looked out of the window meditatively, as if striving to simplify and popularise a profound subject.

“It was one of the mistakes of the early Church,” he said, “to teach abuse and mortification of the body as a religious duty and a sure road to everlasting reward. From this all Christendom has come to regard the body as a slave to be scourged and chastised and overworked by its master, the mind. If so, the slave has learned to make vast reprisals, as our nerve-racked generation shows. The help lies in the promotion of the body to its real dignity—in viewing it as the Greeks did, and honouring it as they did.”

"You mean by a return to a life like theirs?"

"History never moves backward, and reproductions are generally bad in life or art. No, my idea is the application of all modern science and medical knowledge to their basic theories. When we do this we shall have beautiful bodies and symmetrical souls, calm minds unruffled by nervous disorders."

The man stopped taking notes. Looking up at Dilke with curious eyes, he asked anxiously, "Is there any treatment for bad temper combined with melancholia?"

"Bad temper and melancholia? That, I confess, is complicated, if the case has become chronic."

"It has."

"Ah, you have some particular case in your mind perhaps?"

"Yes, I have," the young man admitted; "I came here for an interview; but if you could help me I'd like to turn it into a professional call."

For the first time Dilke began to feel uncomfortable.

"If you will state your case——" he began.

"It is not my case," the caller interrupted; "it's my father's."

"Upon my word," said Dilke to himself. "Here is food for thought. Apparently our own physical ills and our friends' moral ones

weigh upon us with equal heaviness." Aloud, he questioned: "What are his symptoms? He is suffering from depression of spirits, you say. Is there any cause for it?"

"None that I know of."

"Has he always been as he is now?"

"It has grown upon him, and of late it seems to hang over him like a cloud all the time."

"What does he enjoy most?"

"Nothing."

"In what is he most interested?"

"Himself," the young man answered without sarcastic intent. "He says that if we were not all exaggeratedly interested in ourselves life would be unendurable."

"Ah! Schopenhauer," Dilke commented inwardly, and went on: "And about his temper?"

"Difficult, to say the least."

"Is your father conscious of this defect?"

"Yes, except when he is angry. Then he is always sure that it is the other person who is wrong. Do you think you could help him?"

"Would he be willing to see me?"

"I think he would. I am quite sure he would. Could you come this evening at eight?"

Dilke answered gravely that he should be free at that time, and pleased to call upon——? He paused after an upward inflection, waiting for the name.

"Mr. Eldridge," the caller responded; "my name is Henry Eldridge."

Dilke bowed. There was something about the directness of this young man's manner which made him ashamed. He inwardly cursed the sign in the window and himself for putting it there. As Mr. Eldridge rose to go he drew out his purse.

"No, no," said Dilke; "do not speak of payment! I prefer to make fees dependent on cure. If I can help your father it will be time to discuss the reward."

"Thank you!" responded Mr. Eldridge warmly. "There is something in your manner which inspires confidence, though I confess I came here in a spirit of scepticism."

Dilke blushed.

"But now I am quite convinced."

Dilke blushed redder still, and bowed low as he opened the door for his visitor's departure.

"Oh," said Eldridge, stopping suddenly, "I haven't given you the address."

"To be sure—stupid of me not to have asked."

"Stupid of me not to have given it. By the way, is there a drug on your list for stupidity?"

"Several," said Dilke, "but the effect is somewhat evanescent."

Eldridge laughed and closed the door, leaving Dilke plunged in perplexity.

That evening found the young physician at the door of a wide brick house on North Washington Square. He was shown into the library.

A thoroughly satisfactory library it was in proportion and furnishings. Books lined the walls in solid phalanxes: Milton richly dight in tree calf, Horace Walpole braving it in scarlet, Jowett's Plato in the Oxford blue, and Izaak Walton clad in willow green. Easy chairs held out broad arms of invitation and latticed windows were softly curtained within. It should make a man well satisfied with himself and the world, Dilke thought, to live in such a place.

Yet the owner, at the present moment, looked anything but content. He was sitting pen in hand before a table littered with papers. His shaggy eyebrows were drawn together in a frown and he did not look up at the visitor's entrance.

Henry Eldridge came forward to greet Dilke.

"Father, this is the doctor," he said, turning toward a large armchair pushed close to the study table.

"Let the doctor go to the devil!" came the answer from the unseen occupant of the arm-

chair. "I tell you I won't see your infernal charlatan."

Dilke made a motion as if to withdraw; but a girl stepped from behind the curtain.

"My sister," said Eldridge. Dilke bowed. He was about to speak; but the girl laid a warning finger on her lips. "Let *me* talk to my father," she whispered, and going forward she knelt in the firelight beside the armchair.

Certainly she was a beautiful girl. Dilke had time to take in the fact while she was speaking in a low, clear tone. But that was not the thought which was uppermost in his mind, for he perceived with an excited interest that she was the person who had been constantly in his thoughts since yesterday's reception.

"It is your last chance, Papa. Don't throw it away. Think how much happier you would be—how much happier we all should be—if you could be cured."

Either Joyce did not recognise Dilke, or she thought it wise not to complicate the situation with her father by explanations.

"It isn't I who need curing, it's the rest of you."

"You think so, but suppose Doctor Dilke here could make you see it differently, would you not be glad?"

"He couldn't."

"Try him."

"I should be ashamed to be the dupe of such a fraud."

"Try him," was all the girl answered; but the appeal in her tone seemed to make some impression on the occupant of the chair.

"I'll talk to him for five minutes," the voice said; "five minutes, no more. Then send him packing."

"Yes, Papa," Miss Eldridge answered with submission in her tone, but triumph in her eyes. "Doctor Dilke, will you please come forward? This is my father, Mr. Eldridge."

Dilke, passing around the angle of the arm-chair, caught sight of a red face surmounted by a shock of white hair.

"Well, what do you want?"

"I want to cure you," Dilke answered.

"I don't need curing."

"Pardon me, but you do."

Mr. Eldridge gave one questioning look upward.

"Yes," Dilke answered to the glance, "I should like to try. If I do not succeed you need pay me nothing."

"That sounds fair enough," assented Mr. Eldridge, who, though a rich man, was not a reckless one.

"You inflict much useless suffering on yourself."

Mr. Eldridge started at the doctor's words. Then he wheeled around in his chair and assumed a combative expression. "You are labouring under a misunderstanding there," he said. "I do not inflict suffering on myself, but I refuse to shut my eyes to the suffering on every hand. I prefer sight to blindness, though it involves seeing unpleasant truths."

"The trouble is that you see only half truths, and you shut your eyes to the other half. We cannot see the whole truth—we could not take it in if we saw it. We are like soldiers hidden from each other by the smoke of battle. All that we can do is to stand to our guns or lend a hand at a stretcher."

Dilke was a fool to argue with him, and he knew it, for Mr. Eldridge had what the French call "*folie raisonnante*," when a man can give plausible reasons for his delusions. Yet Dilke could not resist firing one more shot.

"For my part," he said, "I call a soldier who leaves his gun, a coward and a deserter. If we do our duty by our fellow-men we shall have little time left for speculating on the meaning of life.

"I thought," said Mr. Eldridge, "that you proposed to treat my mental state through the body. I did not expect to listen to a sermon."

Dilke coloured. He had quite forgotten his

theories, and he now perceived that he had a shrewd as well as a hot-tempered adversary.

"I was about to open the subject of bodily treatment," he answered, drawing out his tablet. "I shall leave a prescription if Miss Eldridge will kindly have it filled. I shall leave also a guide to your daily habits of living; if you do not choose to follow it that is your own affair. I can see that you are suffering from a nervous condition which renders you temporarily irresponsible. It will be my aim to treat this with mild sedatives, removing such excitants as coffee and the various forms of alcohol, also limiting the supply of tobacco."

"I'll take what I damn please!" the old man burst out.

"Very good," Dilke replied; "it is the obstinacy of patients which supplies the income of doctors. Good-night; good-night, Miss Eldridge."

Joyce Eldridge followed him to the door, and stood a white vision framed in the velvet curtains.

"Your father, in my judgment, is suffering from suppressed gout," Dilke said; "but I should not be willing to make that diagnosis with any positiveness without further investigation, which I thought unwise this evening."

"You will see him again?"

"Yes, if you wish, and if he consents."

"To-morrow night?"

"To-morrow night."

As Dilke descended the steps he began to have uneasy twinges inflicted by his professional conscience. "A charlatan," the old man had called him, and in spite of the moment's instinctive resentment, the feeling grew that he had justified the epithet; and yet—and yet—he was doing no harm; indeed, the treatment which he had prescribed was what was needed. He felt sure of it. Why quibble about the name under which it was administered? The thing that haunted him most was a look in Miss Eldridge's eyes. What did it signify? Appeal or reproach? Or was there underneath a glimmer of irony? Really, there should be no room for such a complication of expressions in a single pair of eyes.

And it was thus that destiny had decreed that he was to meet again the face of which he had dreamed last night. He turned away from the thought with a regret too poignant to dwell upon. "His luck," he called it, as if there were any room for luck in a world ruled by the iron rod of cause and effect, of character and results.

All the way home those eyes followed him. How could he meet them again? The more he thought of it the more impossible it seemed, till at length the impossibility mastered him.

He could fail. He could starve. Many a better man had done both before him. But go on with this fraud he could not and would not. He would never go near the house again. He would write a letter. No, he would go back and tell the truth. Nothing less than that he felt would set his troubled conscience at rest, would take the sting out of that veiled ironical glance.

Late into the night he sat before the graying embers of his fire, reviewing the experiences of the day. He spared himself nothing. His worst enemy could not have put the case in stronger language than he did.

When he could no longer endure the torment of humiliation which he was undergoing he went to his bookshelves and took down an old leather-covered volume which he had included in the few that he had brought with him from Pieria. He could not sleep, but he hoped that he could find distraction from the prick of thought in reading. To his discomfiture the first words which greeted his eyes were these:

"I hold every man a debtor to his profession, from the which, as men of course do seek to receive countenance and profit, so ought they of duty to endeavour themselves, by way of amends, to be a help and ornament thereto."

Dilke closed the book roughly and threw it

down on the table. He felt as if conscience had printed the letters on that yellow page, as if it were at himself that the words were pointed.

"If I emerge from this tangle with any shreds of self-respect left," he exclaimed at length, "I register an oath in Heaven that never again, under any circumstances, for any cause will I shadow my soul with a lie."

Before daylight the placard was removed from the window. With a sigh of relief Dilke tore it from top to bottom and thrust it into the waste basket, where he sat watching it with savage satisfaction while the dawn broke in the east. A few hours later he turned the key in his office door and went out into the street. His first errand took him to the newspaper stand, where he bought a copy of *The Morning Glory* and stood still eagerly scanning its pages up and down.

The malefactors of old could not have dreaded the stocks and pillory more than Anthony Dilke feared these columns of black-and-white print. It was being forced home upon him that he had been not only wrong but ridiculous, and the sense of absurdity was more full of shame than the sense of moral turpitude. He felt the hot colour surge over his face as he searched the columns. At last he folded the paper with a

sigh of relief. "Pagan Healing" did not appear in any headlines, and there was no mention of him in the column, "Along the Way." Fate had spared him that.

So far, good. The next problem was how to kill time. He walked the streets till he was faint and weary. The wearier the better, he told himself, since it left him less energy for reflection.

Evening came at last, and again he stood in the hallway of Mr. Eldridge's house.

"Ask Miss Eldridge," he said to the butler, "if I may speak with her here."

When he caught sight of the girl's white dress sweeping down the stairway he found it hard to resist the temptation to turn and fly; but he held the impulse in check and lost no time in grappling with the situation.

"Miss Eldridge," he said, "I cannot see your father to-night—I shall never see him again."

"I don't wonder that you resented his words."

"It is not that. I did resent them; I resented them because they were true—I am a charlatan. It is too true that I, a trained physician, took up this humbug because I could not see my way to an honest practice and I was tired of waiting. Thank Heaven, I have not soiled my hands with any ill-gotten money yet! I came because I must. I wanted to explain it to you. I want

you to tell me that you believe I am trying to be an honest man."

The girl hesitated. "I do believe it," she said after a moment. "Will you prove your honesty of intention by waiting here and letting me tell my father what you have told me?"

Dilke took a deep breath. "Have I not been humiliated enough?" he asked.

"If you are in earnest you will be willing," Miss Eldridge answered.

"Go, then!" exclaimed Dilke, and added under his breath: "After all, what is the difference, since she knows it?"

One minute—two—three—elapsed and then Joyce Eldridge swept radiant into the hall. "Come up!" she called. "My father says his eyes are aching for the sight of an honest man. He has had the best day that he has known in years."

"I cannot come," Dilke answered with deep depression in his tones. "I cannot—I should stand in his presence a self-convicted fraud."

"Listen!" whispered Joyce, "if you are a fraud, so is Henry. He is not a reporter on *The Morning Glory*. He never was. He went into your office because he thought it would be amusing; but before he had talked with you five minutes he began to believe in you. When he came home I scoffed at him. I told him that he was under hypnotic influence; but he said,

'Wait and see for yourself.' I did wait—I did see, and I found myself feeling as he did. Only I could not escape the conviction that there was something underneath it all, I don't know why, and last night I studied you while you were talking with my father. To-day I have been haunted by the impression of having seen you before and recently. Did I? Were you——?"

"Yes," answered Dilke with a smile, "you did, and I was." He had determined with a certain fine instinct not to presume upon the social situation unless Miss Eldridge chose to recognise it; but it pleased him to find himself remembered.

"I am very glad," Joyce said; "I was afraid that I should never have a chance to tell you how much I appreciated what you did for me the other day—I must not stop to do it now, for papa will be growing impatient."

"But——"

"No 'buts.' Come!"

And still smiling, she led the way to the library.

CHAPTER V

THE POINT OF VIEW

THE unreasonable rule the world. A violent temper confers social importance upon its possessor. Those around him are so well pleased to escape the scorpion whip which they see wielded on others that they fly to do his bidding and accord a deference withheld from men of greater powers and milder manners.

To be singled out by Mr. Eldridge was generally recognised as a badge of distinction. To be his trusted adviser was equivalent to a blue ribbon, and Dilke had won it. The choleric banker proved a valiant trumpet blower. He took pride in his physical improvement, and ascribed it all to the unknown doctor whom he had discovered. In a sense he regarded it as a tribute to his own shrewdness, as if stocks which he had bought at a low price had suddenly risen in value.

Dilke's practice thrived apace. Within a month he had on his list of patients two excellent families, one including four children and the other a pair of twins. Dilke carried the twins

successfully through a siege of diphtheria and the fame of him went abroad.

His next patient was an old lady, who was willing to pay a high price for the privilege of talking of her symptoms, but refused to take any medicine. She improved steadily and spoke in high terms of her physician to all her acquaintances.

This lady was Mrs. Fenwick, a sister-in-law of Mr. Eldridge, and much loved by his daughter, to whom she had almost taken the place of a mother.

Everything about Mrs. Fenwick was subdued and mellow. The laces which clung about her throat and fell over her blue-veined hands owned in their yellow tint to the effect of age, and she saw no reason why she should be more reluctant than they to grow old. She felt no sympathy with that pitiful pseudo-youth which strives, by gilding Time's hour glass, to stop the running of its sands.

She had been a widow for thirty years, and in all those three decades she had never altered the fashion of her hairdressing. The locks which had once waved brownly now waved grayly from either side of a widening part, and shadowed the wrinkles which age had engraved in delicate copperplate lines across her forehead.

Her bearing was marked by a deliberation, a

distinction which claimed nothing and assumed everything. When she entered a room the gathering which had been an agglomeration of individuals became society.

Her one passion was for Joyce. For Henry she entertained a quiet contempt as a scion of the Eldridge stock; but Joyce showed her old Huguenot blood, and to her Mrs. Fenwick delighted to repeat the family traditions of her youth.

At one time, soon after the death of his wife, Mr. Eldridge had asked Mrs. Fenwick to take charge of his household; but the experiment had been a failure. Mr. Eldridge discovered that her companionship imposed irksome limitations on his speech and conduct. Mrs. Fenwick had associated all her life with men who made manner the vehicle of respect, and she was accustomed to a certain homage which was like the dried rose leaves of sentiment. Naturally she showed surprise and disapproval at the treatment which she received at the hands of her brother-in-law.

"Martin," she said on one occasion, "I will leave the room till you recover yourself," and she swept up the stairs to be seen no more that day.

A year later she had moved to the house in Tenth Street which had been her home since

then. There Dilke visited her, prescribed for her symptoms, and listened to her talk of men and things. She liked the young physician, and from the beginning showed him every mark of her favour. She criticised him to his face and praised him behind his back. She also instilled many maxims of worldly wisdom, which Dilke ignored at the time and acted upon later. In a friendship between a young man and an older woman the former receives more than he gives. A wide experience of life is at his service, and he learns much of the peculiarities of younger women, which he might never discover for himself.

Mrs. Fenwick's good will played an important part in Dilke's professional advancement. In six months his practice was beginning to rest on a solid basis, when to his vexation Mr. Eldridge decided to go abroad with his daughter, and requested Dilke to accompany him as his physician. This trip was exactly what Dilke himself had recommended as the best cure for Mr. Eldridge's morbid habit of mind and the best preparation for a return to active business life, which he was prepared to urge upon his patient later; but he was far from pleased to be involved in the plan himself. In the first place, he realised that a medical practice is easily lost; in the second place, he disliked the attitude of

semi-dependence; and in the third place, he feared the months of close association with Joyce Eldridge which would be forced upon him.

He had never recovered from a certain embarrassment in their relations, due to a consciousness that she had been a witness to a phase of his career on which he looked back with horror. A man of sensitive conscience regards a lapse from professional ethics as more heinous than any other, and Dilke felt that all the forgiveness which could be meted out to him from outside sources would never enable him to forgive himself. Moreover, he could not rid himself of a feeling that forgiveness did not imply respect, and that in Joyce Eldridge's mind there must always be a lurking sense that he had been tried in the balance and found wanting.

He therefore strove in every way to dissuade Mr. Eldridge from the plan, to recommend another physician, to urge him to go without any, and throw himself on his own moral strength, to test the power of his newly made good resolutions.

Mr. Eldridge, however, would take no denial. His dependence on his new-found physician was almost pathetic, and gratitude demanded that Dilke should accede to his request. In the end Dilke accepted, and sat down to write a dutiful

letter to his mother informing her of his plans. It is wonderful how much truth can be suppressed in an affectionate letter from a devoted son. Many interesting episodes are to be looked for between the lines rather than on them, and, indeed, all letters are written in sympathetic ink, only to be made legible by exposure to the candle of comprehension.

Dilke found it exceedingly difficult to write naturally to his mother. He recognised that to her he was still a boy, and that her feelings were a little hurt by any development of independent manhood. He could have asked no sacrifice to which she would not joyfully have assented; but the fact that he had outgrown the need of her sacrifices was hard for her to bear, and her son endeavoured to suppress it.

The field of their common interests, narrow at the beginning, was steadily growing narrower, and the subject matter of their correspondence was "made ground." Intellectual congeniality preserves affection between mother and son in spite of the lack of temperamental likeness; but without one of these bonds the son's affection comes to be no more than the tenderness reflected from days gone by, when love was an instinct and not an emotion capable of analysis.

If Anthony had any feeling of this kind he never admitted it to himself. There are certain

emotions which it would be impiety to inspect too closely. He simply felt that he understood his mother and that she did not understand him. In this he was not wholly right, since affection, as well as intellect, has its insight.

As Anthony seated himself to compose his letter, he felt that it would be impossible to make Mrs. Dilke comprehend his perplexities, so he took refuge in assurances of devotion and of regret that he was not to spend his summer at home. He wrote like a schoolboy:

"Dearest Mother:

"I had hoped to run out to Pieria for a little visit with you this summer. My winter has not been so very hard worked as you have been thinking, and I am feeling well and not at all exhausted by my labours. Still I should like a vacation, and especially a vacation spent with you in the little green sitting room at home. But I fear it is not to be. One of my first patients and patrons here was Mr. Eldridge, a rich banker, who has decided to go abroad for six months, and has insisted so strongly upon my accompanying him that it seemed ungrateful to refuse, and accordingly our passage is booked for next week. It is a disappointment to me in many ways; but after all, it will be an opportunity to see the world, such as does not often come in a man's way, so I am sure you will agree with me that I was right in accepting.

"I hope that you will write to me often and tell me how life in Pieria is coming on; whether Doctor Macassar's sermons are as tedious as ever; whether Mr. Cantor

still strides up and down Main Street as if he owned it, and whether the turmoil over the library has come to an end. I suppose but for that imbroglio I should be administering pills and potions to the Macassars and Cantors to-day, instead of tugging and striving to make myself known here in New York. I feel that you were right, however, as you generally are, in pushing me out into the world, and I shall hope to give a good account of myself later. I ought to do so if only to justify all your sacrifices for me.

“Your affectionate son,

“ANTHONY DILKE.

“P. S.—I forgot to mention that Mr. Eldridge's daughter is to make one of the party. In some respects this will be pleasanter, in others not so pleasant. But it will not make much difference to me, as I shall see little of her, my attention being devoted to her father.”

The jaunty view of the case which Dilke set forth for his mother's benefit, however it may have impressed her, did not for a moment deceive the writer. He knew that danger lurked in his acceptance of Mr. Eldridge's proposition—the greatest of dangers in the sentimental world, the danger of propinquity.

Joyce Eldridge was the type of girl most to be feared. Her face was like that “intimate country” which the French artists love to paint. Without regular features or striking colouring, it had a trick of smiling its way into the hearts of those who saw it often, while the appeal of

the eyes from under drooping lids was something that one learned to look for, and then to forget to turn away.

Her manner was tinged with pride, and a certain aloofness which melted now and then into an entrancing moment of intimacy only to be swiftly glazed again with a film of reserve. Dilke was puzzled to know how much of this was to be attributed to shyness. It had long been his business to study the curious symptoms of shyness, which he regarded as almost a disease with a pathology of its own—he had seen it where it was least suspected, masquerading in the guise of assurance or hiding behind elaborately raised barriers of pride.

He had come to recognise it in all its forms, from the bashfulness associated with dimpling blushes to that convulsion of the soul which sends the colour in hot waves flooding up to the hair, which tumbles out incoherent half-finished sentences, which drives its victim on to say those things which he ought not to have said, and grips him by the throat to choke the utterance of things which he would give his soul to say.

In Dilke's study of shyness he had learned something of its treatment also. He had learned that the best way of meeting it was by a stolid repose of manner, which gave time for recovery and a sense that nothing was expected.

On one thing he resolved in connection with this European expedition, to arm himself with a manner of cast-iron and never to drop the rôle of professional adviser. To do so would be fatal. Mr. Eldridge's physician he was, and such he would remain; but he found his part a difficult one.

Already Dilke felt the spell of Joyce's personality upon him; already he found his eyes involuntarily seeking her when she entered a room. His nerves would quiver, his cheeks flush. Then he would grasp at his self-control and, forbidding himself speech with her, would gloom apart like an owl.

This glooming habit of Dilke's had a distinct charm for some people. At college a Dilke cult had arisen, composed of men who had discovered that he was deep. It is a fortunate thing for a man to be called "deep." If he be proclaimed witty or charming he may be called upon to justify the claim by producing wit or charm; but to be deep he need only look out at the world from a pair of pensive eyes. Speech might spoil the effect; but silence is a loyal keeper of reputation.

How well Dilke succeeded in the concealment of his sentiments we may infer from certain comments in a letter which Joyce Eldridge wrote from London to her aunt, Mrs. Fenwick.

“‘How do you like your doctor on further acquaintance?’ you ask. My dear aunt, there is not any further acquaintance on which to like him. We meet two or three times a day at meals, spend our evenings together, either at home or at the theatre, and I give you my word that I know no more about him than on the first evening on which I saw him. He is as impersonal as an editorial in the *Times*. He has views, but no sentiments.

“My mind finds him extremely useful, and I expect to surprise you by the extent and variety of my misinformation, for though the information which Mr. Dilke imparts is quite correct when it issues from his lips, it gains a queer twist in passing through the medium of my mentality, and nothing annoys him more than to have me quote him. He says that it is bad enough to be responsible for the things which he does say, and too much to be charged with the things which I say that he said.

“As for papa, he does not know whether it is a pleasant day until he has asked the doctor and received his permission to have an opinion. This simplifies my difficulties wonderfully, since by going to Doctor Dilke first I can almost always carry any point with papa. Doctor Dilke’s influence is really wonderful, the result, I fancy, of the power of a strong will and an equable temper over a capricious will, and—well, I need not describe papa’s temper to you.”

From this it will be seen that Dilke’s self-control was as yet to be trusted, and while the Eldridges were in the great cities his problem was comparatively simple. In London their

days were filled with sightseeing, their evenings with objective amusements. In Paris there was even less time and opportunity for intimate association, for Madame du Pont was there, and Joyce found her both demanding and absorbing.

Madame Émilie du Pont, who before her marriage with a Frenchman had spelled her name with a *y*, was a cousin of Joyce Eldridge and several years older than she. There were people who prided themselves on finding her beautiful, and who enjoyed the surprise which the announcement caused in others. She had red hair and green eyes, a delicate nose, a faultless complexion, a mouth with liberal curves and a wide range of emotional expression.

She was the widow of M. Caravel du Pont, at one time one of the Secretaries of Legation in Washington. In the opinion of Madame du Pont's friends, nothing in her husband's life became him so well as his leaving of it; but to the world his widow remained suitably regretful, unconsolated if not inconsolable.

Her income was small, but expended with a judgment which made it adequate. She had taken a tiny apartment in Paris, and furnished it with a smartness which put mansions to shame. The frills on her muslin curtains were as fresh as the caps of her maids, and the choice bits of old

French furniture gave an air of importance to the simplicity around them.

She had lately learned of the death of her husband's brother and was preparing a suitable wardrobe of mourning-in-law—the black alleviated with white, which fitly symbolises the subdued grief which some women feel for the death of their husbands' relatives.

This afternoon she was seated in a low chair before her mirror, inspecting the reflected effect of a small black toque, perched upon the waves of her red hair.

Her thoughts, if they could have been registered, would have run in parentheses, and have distributed themselves somewhat in this fashion.

“Poor Jacques!”

(“A wide hat would have been more becoming.”)

“Cut off so in the prime of life.”

(“That bow is at least an inch too high.”)

“I wonder how he left his family provided for.”

(“Perhaps if I pinch it in over the ear it will look better.”)

“What a mystery death is!”

(“Pshaw! The best way will be to rip the whole thing to pieces and make it over.”)

Madame du Pont drew out her work basket, and taking up her scissors, began to snip vigor-

ously at the trimming of the toque, when a knock at the door startled her. Half guiltily she thrust bonnet and scissors into the drawer before giving the maid permission to enter.

"Ask Miss Eldridge to come in here," she said after reading the card on the tray. A moment later Joyce stood in the doorway.

"You don't mind my coming, dear, do you?" Joyce began rather timidly.

"No, indeed! It is a relief to see someone. I never did believe in shutting one's self up after a trouble of any kind. It is then that one has most need of distraction, and there is no distraction like the society of friends. Lay aside your wraps and sit down in this corner by the window. I will have tea served here."

"Thank you. I wish I had your gift for making a place attractive. Papa likes everything heavy—furniture, dinners, conversation—everything."

Madame du Pont drew out a cigarette case and held it out to Joyce, who declined.

"*Bien, mon enfant!* Reserve some pleasures for the years to come. Besides, it is a habit that grows on one. '*Qui a bû boira.*'"

Joyce disapproved of cigarettes and shuddered to think what Mrs. Fenwick would say of them; but she knew that Émilie would regard her

scruples as provincial, so she suppressed them and made no comment.

Émilie du Pont sat looking at her cousin for some time in silence, through a thin, curling line of smoke. Then she said suddenly:

“Why don’t you marry someone, Joyce?”

The easy chairs were placed in a contiguity admirably adapted for confidences; but Joyce had none to offer.

She only repeated:

“Marry? I am not in love with anyone, Émilie.”

“Oh, that is a minor consideration. My dear Joyce, love is glamour, atmosphere. It has nothing to do with the man himself. If it had, all girls would be in love with the same man and the results would be disastrous.”

Joyce leaned back in her chair and drew a long breath.

“What a gambler’s life a girl’s is!” she exclaimed. “She is told that the only happiness for a woman lies in marriage; but that she must not marry without meeting her ideal, and that if she does meet him she must not make a single forward step, but must remain entirely passive on the chance that he may rush to claim her. Really, the outlook seems decidedly precarious.”

“Some girls demand so much that they make

the outlook precarious," Madame du Pont observed with intentional emphasis.

"Don't you know any interesting men—really interesting—interesting in themselves, I mean?"

"Yes; dozens; but they are not men to marry, especially not men for you to marry. You never could love or at least continue to love a man whom you did not respect. The very qualities like irresponsibility and a sort of vagabond experience of many phases of life would be anything but attractive in marriage."

"I think," said Joyce, "that I should like to marry a vagabond. I am so tired of stationary respectability."

"There are two requisites in a husband," said Madame du Pont. "He must be ambitious, and he must be placed."

"Placed?"

"Yes. It is not agreeable to go about explaining one's husband. It is convenient to have his name carry his genealogy."

"Do you consider me 'placed,' Émelie?" Joyce asked, with mingled amusement and anxiety in her tone:

"If not placed, at least placeable," Madame du Pont replied. "Everything will depend upon your marriage. You would easily degenerate into domesticity."

Joyce laughed.

"How is your father now?" Madame du Pont asked, thinking perhaps that Joyce was treating a serious subject too lightly.

"Better, thank you. Much better. He can even discuss the tariff without excitement. His new physician has done wonders for him."

"And you see this doctor every day, I suppose."

"Of course."

"Is he good looking?"

"Decidedly, I should say."

"Clever?"

"His success with papa shows that."

"What about his manners?"

"I never noticed anything about them."

"Then they are excellent, depend upon it. Joyce——"

"What is it, Émilie?"

"You are not in danger of falling in love with this young doctor?"

"He came from Pieria."

Madame du Pont smiled.

"Pieria?" she questioned, with arched eyebrows. "And pray, where is Pieria? Your doctor is not a naturalised Greek, I suppose."

"No, no, of course not. Pieria is a small Western town in America. It is a manufacturing town at the junction of two railroads. I was there once with papa. He liked it."

"And you did not?"

"Like it? I should say not. It was like an overgrown boy with nothing but its size to boast of, all factories and smart, upstart houses. We have plenty of places like it; but I dare say you have had time to forget them over here."

"Ah! in a foreign land one remembers only the pleasant things of home."

Madame du Pont uttered this highly creditable little sentiment with an appropriate sigh; but in the next breath she questioned:

"Can no possible good come out of Pieria?"

"Not for one who knows Pieria as well as I do. I assure you, Émilie, if I ever do fall in love, it will be with a man from the steppes of Asia, or Borneo or 'some far-off bright Azore'—a man with a mysterious past."

"Then," said Madame du Pont, "I devoutly hope that you will never fall in love. But about this doctor. What is his name? You have mentioned it, but I forget."

"Dilke—Anthony Dilke."

"Dilke?" repeated Madame du Pont meditatively. "I do not know the name. If he were connected with the English Dilkes—but one must not go too fast. I shall invite him to dinner with you and Mr. Newbold. I mean, by the way, to ask your father to let Mr. Newbold paint your portrait. There will be plenty

of time while you are here and he is an excellent artist. I have been to his studio with friends, and I like his pictures exceedingly."

"Oh, thank you, Émilie! Not for speaking to papa about the portrait, but for asking Doctor Dilke."

"Why should she thank me if she feels no interest in the man?" queried Madame du Pont as she watched the girl. She liked Joyce, but she was irritated by her lack of initiative. She felt that her cousin was drifting through life in a way which would be impossible to her energetic temperament. She had lived long enough in France to believe in arranged marriages, and Mr. Eldridge's attitude toward his daughter seemed to her to savour of criminal negligence. Joyce's beauty properly heralded might secure anybody, and she could not see her drift into an alliance with a nobody without an effort to save her.

It was an odd coincidence that at the very time when these thoughts were burrowing in Madame du Pont's mind, Dilke was reading a letter from his mother, hinting at the same problem from a widely different point of view.

"I have just had a call from—whom do you think?—from *Mrs. Cantor*, who has taken no notice of me since you left and had apparently forgotten my existence. This morning she came, and the object of her call will

surprise you more than the fact of her coming. It was to suggest your return to Pieria. You are to be rehabilitated, reinstated and presented with a petition for your return from all the leading citizens. There! Isn't that a surprise?

"I told the lady that I was very doubtful whether you would be persuaded to come back; but of course I did not presume to decide for you. You will probably receive the testimonial in due form, and then can decide for yourself. I will not even attempt to describe the events which have brought about this amazing change. I would rather that the petition should speak for itself.

"As for your European trip, I am very glad that this opportunity has come to you after your hard-worked winter."

(Dilke grinned.)

"It will give you sightseeing without expense, and I am sure it is a great opportunity for Mr. Eldridge to secure such a doctor as you. I hope he pays you well for it. There is only one factor in the case which troubles me, and that is the daughter. Mrs. Cantor, it seems, has heard of her and spoke of her to me. Of course you will be thrown with her a great deal, and I know how easy it is for a young man to be entrapped."

(Dilke frowned, and made a motion as if to tear the paper. Then he thought better of the matter and read on.)

"Perhaps I am partial; but I am sure that any girl whom you asked would marry you, and I am so anxious that she should be the right one, sweet tempered and

yielding and domestic, and one who will make you happy!

"You may think that I don't know the world because I have lived all my life in Pieria; but I have seen many wives, and I have seen how they can make or mar their husbands' careers. No matter how attractive this Miss Eldridge may be, don't commit yourself!"

At this point Dilke's exasperation overcame his filial affection. He rose, lighted the lamp and held the letter over the flame till it was consumed to the last word. As his eye caught the mirror he saw his face reflected there blushing like a girl's. Half consciously he had been asking himself all the while he was reading what Joyce Eldridge would say if her glance should happen to fall on that letter.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Dilke, "what a race of cads men would become if they took their mothers too seriously!"

CHAPTER VI

PIERIA ONCE MORE

IN spite of the proverbial assertion of the contrary, the absent are sometimes right, and as they are not present to triumph over the admission, the fact is the more readily granted, especially when it involves the refutation of those near at hand, whose visible humiliation atones for the exaltation of people at a distance.

The history of the letter which caused Anthony Dilke such vexation and sorely strained his filial affection, involved causes curiously remote from any that he could divine.

Shortly after his departure Pieria experienced a change of heart. As time went on the advantages of the new library grew familiar and therefore less striking, while the disadvantages of association with Jacob Secor became more and more evident. Ugly rumours which had peeped uncertainly from the background at first, now thrust themselves impudently and insistently forward, and by their very ugliness gained a hearing if not a credence. Gradually the library trustees were placed on the defensive, forced to

explanations, while their fellow-townsmen who "would not play false and yet would wrongly win," satisfied their consciences by using the library and abusing the trustees.

Presently it began to be roundly asserted that Anthony Dilke had voiced the moral sentiment of the community when he insisted upon a direct refusal of Secor's beneficence. Many business men were sure that if they had chanced to be on the Board they would have taken their stand with Dilke; though of course now that the matter was decided, it would be mere folly to refuse to make use of the library's advantages. At gratitude to the giver they drew the line. To acknowledge the debt would be to bow the knee to Baal.

Even Doctor Macassar and Mr. Cantor refused to feel grateful, while Mr. Towns never passed the building without a muttered imprecation. A face seemed to smile at him with malevolent irony from the stones, and the name of Secor glared odiously above the door.

For some time these gentlemen flattered themselves that the humiliation of the dedication ceremonies was the climax of their discomfiture; but they were soon undeceived. They had taken the old man of the sea on their shoulders and he was not to be shaken off so easily.

It soon transpired that Secor had bought the

largest mills in Pieria, intended to extend their industries, and had ordered a number of new cottages for workmen erected in their vicinity. A little later it appeared that he had purchased a dwelling, a large brick house with white pillars, commanding the finest avenue in the town. Then, to the dismay of the better element of Pierians, it was announced that Mr. Secor intended to take up his residence in his native town preparatory to seeking political honours. Here indeed was a dilemma.

Resentment against this benefactor of the town filled the air. It seemed to belch in smoke from the factory chimneys, to ring from the church bells, above all, to mutter in the whisper which followed the loosely knit figure, with its head held unduly erect and the face with its half-insolent, half-patronising smile. This smile said as plainly as words, "I have bought my place and I mean to have it."

There are a multitude of men who, if they recognise that they cannot serve God and Mammon at the same time, believe that they can do it by turns; that having accumulated a comfortable quantity of this world's goods in the service of Mammon, they may return to the safer and more respectable task of serving the Lord, welcomed back, if not by Him, at least by His deputies, on the payment of tribute

money and the promise of activity in the Church.

Many such were now found to apologise for Secor, and to hold that his beneficence should wipe out past offences. A man who wishes to secure the good opinion of the world will be far more particular about his way of spending money than about his way of making it. Benevolence in wealth excuses previous crookedness of dealing and blinds the public to the obvious truth that honesty is the only foundation for generosity.

So it came about that there was a Secor party and an anti-Secor party. With Secor or against him his fellow-townsmen must range themselves. The Reverend James Macassar and Mr. Cantor would be asked to address meetings, Mr. Towns would be asked to act as treasurer of a campaign fund. Would they accept or refuse?

In this perplexing tangle many minds turned toward Anthony Dilke, and many were the wishes expressed that he were present to lead the opposition. He, at least, was free to act as his conscience dictated, to oppose a candidate whom he thought unfit to represent the citizens of his town and state.

Time went on, and Secor won his election to Congress. His fellow-townsmen rejoiced with their lips; but in their hearts they were struck

with wrath and shame. At this juncture still another factor unexpectedly asserted itself to help the popular reaction in favour of Dilke. Winter wore away, and as spring came on typhoid fever broke out, and the local authorities and physicians showed themselves inadequate to cope with it. The water supply was investigated, the milk tested, and still the fever gained ground.

New victims were added daily to the list of sufferers. The bank president was ill. Doctor Macassar's daughter died and was buried in the trim cemetery with heavy iron gates—gates calculated to inspire a certain grim mirth in the beholder, since the only enemy whom they could be supposed to shut out was Death, and he drove his black-plumed chariots through them without even stopping to pay toll.

One day, when the epidemic was still growing, Mrs. Towns, a withered little woman, slave of her husband and children, came hastily into the house of her sister, Mrs. Cantor. According to her custom, she ran upstairs unannounced, to find Mrs. Cantor sitting in a small rocking chair in her bedroom, busily at work drawing red worsted through coffee sacking, with fell intent to make a domestic rug.

It was generally Mrs. Towns who visited and Mrs. Cantor who was visited. This was partly

because Mrs. Cantor, being a large body, moved slowly, and partly because as the wife of Pieria's leading citizen, she clung to certain dignities which must be respected in spite of family ties.

As Mrs. Towns entered the room out of breath from the haste of her walk, her sister looked up anxiously.

"Goodness me, Julia, how you startled me!" she exclaimed. "I wish you would make more noise coming up the stairs. I declare, you look queer. Is anything the matter?"

"Yes, there is. Tommy is sick."

"I am not at all surprised," interrupted Mrs. Cantor, drawing out a long thread of worsted and doubling it through the eye of her darning needle. She perceived in this conversational opening an excellent opportunity for a long-deferred lecture on hygiene, and would not allow the talk to drift away till it had been delivered.

"I must tell you, Julia," she said, taking off her gold-bowed spectacles and rubbing them reflectively with the coffee sacking, "that everyone has been talking about the way you feed that child—griddle cakes and coffee for breakfast, and Tommy only twelve years old! Edward has one chop and a potato with a glass of milk, and he is always well."

Mrs. Towns flushed. "*My* cakes never hurt

anybody," she answered. "They're as light as light, and as for the coffee, perhaps that is what makes Tommy stand at the head of his class."

This was touching a sore subject, for Ned Cantor and Tommy Towns were rivals for scholastic honours in the Pieria high school.

"Oh, very well!" said Mrs. Cantor, putting on her spectacles again and resuming her work, as if the subject under discussion had lost all interest. "If you're satisfied, I don't know why anyone should interfere. I thought you *said* that Tommy was sick, and I was *trying* to show you where the trouble lay."

Mrs. Towns rose, though she had scarcely seated herself. Her under lip trembled like a squirrel's as she said:

"I guess I'll go right back to Tommy. He is very poorly. I think myself he has the fever, and I did expect my own sister——"

This serious view of the matter thawed the ice of Mrs. Cantor's resentment, and family affection flowed freely.

"You sit down, Julia, and I'll put on my things and go right back with you. I'll take poultices and rhubarb and soda. If it's his liver that's upset, these will soon bring him round, and even if it's the—the—other thing, why he's a fine tough boy, and he'll pull through and be a credit to us all yet."

The identification of interests comforted Mrs. Towns; but the praise of Tommy made her anxious. She suspected that her sister was speaking of him as she would wish to have spoken in case the worst happened. Mrs. Cantor had never been loud in commendations of her nephew before, and her present encomium seemed a bad omen.

"No, thank you, Emma," Mrs. Towns answered, "I wouldn't dare give Tommy any medicine till Doctor Patchen comes. He said he'd be in this afternoon. The trouble is, I don't have much confidence in him."

"He's the best there is, now Doctor Dilke is gone."

"That's just it. Half my trouble would be over, if only Doctor Dilke were here."

"Well, he isn't," Mrs. Cantor answered, shortly.

Mrs. Towns had no courage for a further combat; but she ventured timidly: "Don't you think perhaps he would come back if he were asked?"

"Who's going to ask him?"

"Why, Thomas was talking about it last night, and he said Doctor Dilke had been made a scapegoat when really he was right."

"Thomas may speak for himself. I have not heard my husband say anything of the kind,

though he thinks things turned out unfortunately. But, as he says, nobody can tell how things will turn out. A man can only follow his lights."

"Thomas says they had lights enough; but the only one they followed shone on a pile of money."

"Well, well, what of it?" exclaimed Mrs. Cantor, tired of hearing the exposition of her brother-in-law's views, which she regarded as superfluous if not impertinent, when offered to one living in daily contact with a greater luminary.

"This of it!" replied her sister, drying the flood of tears which had threatened to submerge her power of speech. "We want to get Doctor Dilke to come back, and we think if we sent a petition signed by everyone and headed by Doctor Macassar, he would come."

"Would he!" observed Mrs. Cantor grimly.

"I believe he would, and I want you to go and see his mother and ask her about it."

"I am the last person——"

"No, you're not, You're the best person. You have so much influence——"

Mrs. Cantor softened perceptibly.

"If you went, Mrs. Dilke would feel that it was important."

Mrs. Cantor softened still more, and her sister pressed the advantage. "Yes, Mrs. Dilke would

feel so complimented that she would urge it on her son, and he cares so much for her that he would come just to please her."

"Well, I'll speak to John——"

"Don't stop to speak to John. Go this morning. We need Doctor Dilke right away, and it all rests with you."

The sense of importance was dear to Mrs. Cantor's soul, and the suggestion of responsibility distinctly gratified her.

"Well, then," she said, "you go back to Tommy and I will come round after I've been to call on Mrs. Dilke."

Mrs. Towns brightened at once. "Well, I must say, sister, your *actions* are real kind."

This Parthian arrow dipped in poisoned balm, Mrs. Towns shot backward as she ran down stairs with the softness to which Mrs. Cantor objected. As soon as her visitor had departed, Mrs. Cantor proceeded to array herself in her best attire, a trailing black grenadine gown, and a black hat with a long white feather which was the admiration of the feminine half of Doctor Macassar's congregation on Sundays. She decided not to wait for her carriage, but to walk the few blocks which separated her house from Mrs. Dilke's. No sooner had she set out than she regretted her decision, for the asphalt pave-

ment was hot to her feet and the sun made her face very red and uncomfortable.

Mrs. Dilke's sitting room was gratefully cool after the heat outside. The drawn blinds protected the room from the bright May sunshine; but bars of light entered through the slats and lay across the green and white matting on the floor, making it like a daisy-pied meadow.

As soon as Mrs. Cantor's near-sighted eyes could discern anything in the dim light, she perceived Mrs. Dilke sitting near the window, some white knitting work in her hand, and on her lap an open volume.

As Mrs. Cantor surveyed Mrs. Dilke sitting there in her white gown with lilac ribbons, small and pale and cool, she was uncomfortably conscious of disadvantage. She wished that she had waited for the carriage; she wished that she had delayed to consult her husband; she wished that she had not come at all; she wished that Julia were not always hurrying her into things.

"I thought I'd drop in to talk over the fever," Mrs. Cantor began, in answer to the slight look of surprise on Mrs. Dilke's face, as she rose to greet her visitor.

"The fever? Is it spreading?"

"Yes," Mrs. Cantor answered, sinking into a wicker chair which creaked apprehensively under

her weight. "It began around the mills; but now it's in every section of the town."

"I am sorry," Mrs. Dilke answered, provokingly at her ease. "Can't they find out where the trouble lies—what is causing it all?"

"They don't seem to," Mrs. Cantor answered, pressing the fingers of her white chamois gloves together and observing with mortification that the odour of cleaning fluid still lingered upon them. "The fact is," she went on, "we don't feel satisfied with the way the doctors are going to work."

"No doubt they have done as well as they knew how," Mrs. Dilke answered, with secret triumph in her heart.

"That's just it. They don't know enough—their methods are too old-fashioned. Some of us have been thinking that if your son had stayed in Pieria, things might have been different."

The olive branch was extended now; but the dove was wary and would not peck at it too soon.

"Oh," Mrs. Dilke responded coolly, "one never can tell. Perhaps Tony could not have done any more than the rest. Of course, his training in Vienna taught him a great deal, and he has had excellent results with all his typhoid patients; but those things are often matters of luck."

As Mrs. Dilke withdrew, Mrs. Cantor advanced.

"A lucky doctor means a skilful doctor," she observed with emphasis. "Don't you suppose if Doctor Dilke knew that he was wanted and needed in Pieria, he would come back?"

Instead of answering immediately, Mrs. Dilke began counting her stitches. The pause gave Mrs. Cantor an opportunity to look about the room. The simplicity of its furnishings went far to restore her sense of superiority. The matting, the plain green walls hung with photographs of Anthony's choosing, the wicker chairs, could but seem humble to one accustomed to plush and piano lamps and oil paintings. The consciousness of superiority at home inevitably tinges one's manner abroad.

Undismayed by Mrs. Dilke's silence, her guest resumed with a faint hint of patronage in her voice:

"There is talk of getting up a petition signed by the leading men of Pieria, Doctor Macassar and all, asking your son to come back, and I have called to say that we hope you will urge him to consider it favourably."

Mrs. Dilke smiled. "It will certainly give my son pleasure to receive such a petition," she said, looking up at her visitor. "I know

how much he values the esteem of his old neighbours."

"Then you think he would come?"

"Of course, I couldn't tell anything about that," Mrs. Dilke answered, bending her head to conceal the triumph in her eyes. "Tony is doing very well in New York." For herself Mrs. Dilke was as humble as an apostle; for her boy she was as proud as Lucifer.

"No doubt," Mrs. Cantor assented with flattering readiness, "his talents would meet with recognition anywhere, and as he grows older he of course understands better how to adapt himself——"

"That is certainly a great element in success if one knows where to stop," said Mrs. Dilke, casting off stitches as she spoke. If she had suffered, if her son's absence had left her lonely and sore at heart, these moments were yielding her a sweet revenge.

Meanwhile Mrs. Cantor felt that she was making slow progress; in fact, that the longer the talk went on the further she seemed to be from securing Mrs. Dilke's intercession with her son. Though no student of the philosophers, she had a shrewd perception of one of their cardinal principles, that where you fail to appeal to the mind by reason you may successfully attack the will through self-interest.

"Of course it would be pleasant for you to have him back," she observed.

This was a false move.

"My son and I are quite of one mind in the matter of his profession," Mrs. Dilke responded, with more reserve in her tone than she had yet shown. "I am glad that he has found a field large enough for his talents, and I should never urge his returning to Pieria on *my* account."

Mrs. Cantor rose thoroughly discomfited, angry with Julia, discontented with her own diplomacy, furious with the pale little lady who had shown herself indifferent to the public sentiment of Pieria. But, brimming over as her mind was with mixed emotions, she could not take her leave without an attempt to satisfy an inquisitiveness which had been stirred to life by the idle whispers of village gossips.

Curiosity is like one of the old hags who claw over a whole ash barrel full of clinkers for the possible sound coal at the bottom. Mrs. Cantor felt herself covered with the ashes of humiliation; but she was loath to depart without securing her coal of compensation.

"I hear," she said, smoothing her gloves as she looked at Mrs. Dilke, "that there are attractions in New York which would naturally make Pieria seem dull to your son."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, they say that he is interested in a young lady."

If Mrs. Cantor had known what a poisoned dagger she was planting in Mrs. Dilke's bosom she would have felt a certain satisfaction; but the quiet face above the knitting gave no sign.

"May I ask the lady's name?" Mrs. Dilke inquired, a note of sarcasm in her voice.

"Who should know it, if not Doctor Dilke's mother?" Mrs. Cantor answered, with a meaning smile. "I hope you will give him our congratulations when you write."

"Thank you. When I hear that he needs them, I will. You won't stay?"

"Not this morning. It's very kind; but I am going to see my sister's little boy who is ill."

"Not with the fever, I trust."

"Oh, I think not. In any case we have the greatest confidence in Doctor Patchen. We feel quite safe in *his* hands."

Mrs. Cantor swept out of the door, behind which Mrs. Dilke stood with tightly interlaced fingers and a spot of red, bright as youth, in her cheeks.

"Tony shall not come back—he shall not—he shall not!" Mrs. Dilke was saying this over and over to herself as she watched the portly figure in black grenadine swaying down the gravel walk.

As Mrs. Cantor reached the gate the letter carrier passed her on his rounds and dropped a letter in the Dilke box. Mrs. Dilke snatched it out eagerly and saw Anthony's writing on the envelope. Mrs. Cantor's words were still sounding in her ears, their poison still working in her mind as she tore it open.

The letter was the one telling of Anthony's plans, of Mr. Eldridge's offer and of his acceptance, while finally at the very end, and almost in parenthesis, came the mention of Mr. Eldridge's daughter, who was to be a member of the party on the coming European trip.

In this Mrs. Dilke seemed to read confirmation of Mrs. Cantor's hints. Could it be that Tony had fallen in love with this Miss Eldridge, and that his mother was the only person in ignorance of the situation?

Mrs. Dilke was a fairly cultivated woman and sufficiently liberal minded up to the point where her husband had left her when he died. With his death all intellectual impulse stopped. Her reading, having been wholly a matter of sympathy, she had no object in continuing, and in religious matters it seemed to her a kind of impiety to stir an inch from the spot where he had planted her feet.

Of her son's inner life and convictions she knew nothing, being quite satisfied to bask in

the atmosphere of excluding tenderness with which he surrounded her. To love without comprehending, and to be loved without comradeship, was all that her nature demanded; but when it came to so personal a matter as marriage she felt that a mother had claims not to be ignored.

She had borne patiently the trials of separation; but to be shut out from his confidence in such a vital affair was too much for her endurance. It was not like Tony. There was only one explanation. He was under the malign influence of some girl unworthy of him, a girl who was already teaching him to neglect and ignore his mother.

Mrs. Dilke walked slowly back to the sitting room, and seated herself in the little green willow rocking chair. Then she spread out the letter and read it through again from beginning to end. A thousand winged terrors seemed to fly out of it to harass her soul. Before she had finished, she had wrought herself up to the point where men take to drink and women to ink. She persuaded herself that it was her duty to lose no time in warning Tony against this designing young woman who rose before her imagination in blacker and blacker colours as she thought of her.

Under this impulse she seized her writing

pad and wrote the ill-fated screed which followed her son from New York to London, from London to Paris, and found its way to charred fragments in his hands.

The wisdom of refraining from advice in situations not fully comprehended is given to few, and these few are not mothers.

CHAPTER VII

FRESH WOODS AND PASTURES NEW

WITH inward pride and outward reluctance, Mr. Eldridge consented to the painting of his daughter's portrait, and Newbold was eager for the task. Here was a picture which he felt would tax the utmost subtlety of his brush. At first he found the work easy; but soon he learned the difficulties of painting a face which was never twice alike, in which the varying mood seemed to change, not the expression alone, but the very cast of the features.

Dilke was not present at the sittings. He was glad that no one suggested it, and yet, with a curiously contradictory emotion, he resented the high spirits in which Madame du Pont and Joyce returned from the artist's studio, and the constant allusions to bits of talk which had gone on there. Joyce frequently quoted Newbold's views, not only on art, where they might be supposed to be of value, but on literature, philosophy, the conduct of life. Dilke found this absurd, and made a point of combating them, quite regardless of his real opinion.

Intellectual quarrels are the subtlest form of love making. Yet Dilke was quite sure that he was only striving to counteract the erroneous point of view which Joyce Eldridge was adopting from Newbold, and that his eagerness to convince her was a tribute to his devotion to truth. Joyce's manner throughout was so cool and impersonal that Dilke was tempted to smile with bitter humour over his mother's fears. The words of her letter had burned themselves into his memory, and he sometimes repeated them to himself—"entrapped," "don't commit yourself!"—and here before him sat a young Diana, unapproachable as a smiling deity who looks down from her cold heights on the passions of men.

From Paris Mr. Eldridge, by Dilke's advice, went directly to a health resort on the borders of Switzerland, a place looking southward over mountain peaks and smiling down on sheltered farms and peaceful valleys. Hygiene is a science which makes disease a disgrace and health an achievement. Consequently it tends to conceit and censoriousness. If there is one spot on earth duller than another it is a health resort for those who are not out of health. The routine of baths and diet is a weariness to the flesh, and even an invalid sometimes wonders if health is worth the price at which

it is acquired, while the perpetual reiteration of the charms of the view is in itself a confession of the dulness which presides over everything else. A view is one word of Nature, and constantly repeated to the eyes, becomes as tedious as a single word of man everlastingly impressed upon the ear. On the other hand, it affords conversation to the commonplace and enjoyment to the inert.

Mr. Eldridge found mental employment in committing the names of surrounding mountains to memory, and physical occupation in the round of hygienic exercises. Dilke was not sorry to resign his responsibilities temporarily to the doctor in charge of "the hydro-therapeutic establishment." But there were drawbacks. It left him time to reflect, and it threw him more and more constantly with Joyce. Together they wandered about the grounds; together they read under the trees; together they made expeditions to the famous châteaux close at hand.

"What a hero Voltaire was!" Dilke exclaimed, as he sat one day with Joyce under the shadow of Ferney, looking off over the wide-stretching leagues of landscape.

Joyce shook her head in a quick sidewise manner, which set the sunlight dancing on the ripples of her hair. Dilke was seized with an irresistible

desire to see it dance again, so he persisted in repeating his assertion: "Yes, one of the great heroes of the world."

"*'Quel drôle de goût!'*" as Émilie says. You have a strange taste in hero worship if you select that shallow sceptic to admire."

"Voltaire a sceptic! I should as soon call Washington a Tory. Voltaire was a believer if ever there was one. He believed in truth as he saw it, and he launched blows in its defense, which sent his enemies howling to their tents. That is why he has been so well abused that to have hated him was held a liberal education."

"I have never read much of his books," said Joyce, with raised eyebrows, "but I have tasted them as one tastes wine, and I found the vintage thin and bitter."

Dilke smiled. "You do not like wine at all," he answered; "your taste is for sugar candy. Your Mecca is Coppet and your ideal a Madame Récamier, that nonentity whose qualities would have been a cipher but for the numeral of her beauty before them."

"*'The numeral of her beauty!'*" Joyce repeated scornfully. "And is it in that way that you would dismiss the force that has moved the world?"

"That," Dilke observed, "is because through all time men's minds and judgments have been

ruled by their eyes and their senses. It is the privilege of posterity to escape from this despotic sway and judge through their reason, to estimate Madame Récamier, for instance, not by her curls or her complexion, but by the weight of her influence on great questions, by the words which tradition has left us, and which are rather inadequate when compared with those of her contemporaries and intimates——”

“Very well,” Joyce responded, with a little shrug; “you may set the portrait of Mme. de Staël on your mantel and the death mask of Voltaire on your desk, and then sit down with their books in your hands to glean what dry wisdom you can. As for me, I will take David’s Madame Récamier and spend happy hours in simply looking at her and rejoicing that such a beautiful woman once lived.”

“For the matter of that,” said Dilke, smiling, “beauty did not die with Madame Récamier. There are beautiful women living to turn the heads of men to-day.”

“Oh, but not like her! You don’t understand. It is the perfection, the flawlessness, the fact that her beauty needs no explanations, no allowances.”

“Perhaps that is why I find it less interesting,” Dilke commented, watching with amusement the eagerness with which Joyce was throwing herself into the argument.

"If you find perfection unsatisfactory, that is your misfortune."

"I find perfection of form less satisfactory than the thing expressed," Dilke answered. "I wish to see something going on in the face to make the beauty worth while."

"We shall never agree," Joyce declared.

"I am ready to be convinced."

"You say so; but you are not."

"And you?"

"I am not ready to be convinced at all. I should hate to think as you do. Life would not be worth having on your terms. I wish to live in a beautiful world, even if it is all of my own imagining; and to you an illusion, however beautiful, is a foe to be slain offhand and its place supplied by a cold abstraction which you call truth. You must be forever prying and testing."

"If you call an illusion by its true name I do not object to it. If you call it a belief, that is another matter."

"You could not like and admire a person whom you did not trust, could you?" Joyce asked meditatively.

The question stung Dilke. It brought to his mind a subject which he was forever striving to forget.

"I don't know," he said shortly.

With the quick perception which was like a sixth sense, Joyce noted the sudden change in his tone, the depression in his face, and she threw a warm friendliness into her voice as she said: "I think that you are the most loyal person I have ever known."

Dilke's face lighted. "I would rather have that said of me than anything in the world," he answered. "I wish that I deserved it; but what put it into your mind now?"

"The way in which you were speaking of Voltaire. He is a real person to you still, and you defend his memory as hotly as you would have defended his character if he were living to-day."

Dilke smiled. "I am afraid that is no test," he said. "The dead have left their record signed and sealed, so you know what you have to stand by; but the living are liable at any moment to do something which strains your loyalty to the breaking point——"

Again Dilke came to a sudden halt in his speech, and this time Joyce did not strive to break the silence. Instead, she rose and they walked slowly toward the waiting carriage, wherein Mr. Eldridge was seated bolt upright, with his back to the view and his watch in his hand.

"I am glad that we are leaving to-morrow," he said shortly. "Perhaps when Doctor Dilke

becomes my physician again he will give me some of his time."

An angry light rose in Dilke's eyes, but Joyce broke in hastily: "It was my fault, papa."

"I dare say."

"We sat down to rest, and we did not realise how long we were loitering."

"Well, well, get into the carriage now so that I may at least be in time for my afternoon zwieback and milk."

Joyce gave Dilke one quick glance, half amused, half deprecating, and then with his help climbed to the seat beside her father and was silent during the whole of the return drive.

Joyce went to her room early that evening. She lighted the candles in the tall candelabra on either side of her mirror. In the centre of the dressing table, propped from beneath by a prayer book, and supported against the mirror, stood a photograph of Mrs. Fenwick. Thus, doubly reinforced by devotion and vanity, it constantly attracted Joyce's eyes. Indeed, the girl had fallen into the habit of holding conversations with it in which she played the parts of two speakers—herself and her aunt. This was not difficult, for her aunt's words represented the composite memories of many talks in the past. After fifty, people's opinions are no longer in galley proof, to be changed at a moment's notice.

They are stereotyped plates, which one who knows the mental processes may draw out at any time, and be quite sure of finding unchanged after the lapse of years.

To-night, when Joyce had exchanged her dress for a loose, flowing wrapper and had let down the masses of her heavy hair, she drew an easy chair before the dressing table, and, seating herself, leaned her elbows on the table's top. One hand was bent backward and the other laid over it palm to palm with outstretched finger tips. On these Joyce leaned her head, inclining sidewise with the right cheek upward.

The shadow in the glass contrasted sharply with the photograph beside it. The one all curves and colour, the other of a delicate greyish whiteness with pinched nostrils and dark, shrewd eyes punctuating the hollows below the brows.

"Aunt Sylvia, were you in love with Uncle Francis?" Joyce asked, questioning the picture with a whimsical glance; and then answered herself in the familiar tones of her aunt. Mimicry was a gift which nature had bestowed on the girl, and which reason had wisely suppressed in the interest of popularity, so that it was only when she was alone that she gave it vent.

"My dear niece," the familiar gentle tones replied, "I respected your uncle more than any

man I ever met. Intellectually we were very congenial and he never failed in consideration."

"Do you call that being in love?"

"I call it cherishing a tender affection."

"No doubt. Your affections were your husband's; but I suspect there was a region of separate interests like the *allée défendue* in Villette, where the foot of man never trod. Tell me honestly, did you never grow mortally weary of good Uncle Francis and long to run away, not with anyone else, but just to a blissful aloneness where you could expand as far as you chose without striking the limits of another mind?"

The eyes in the photograph seemed to smile.

"I had no time," said the voice, "to think much of developing myself. There seemed enough to do in developing other people. The insistence on the interests of self is peculiarly modern and not particularly needed by human nature."

"One more question: Did it not annoy you to have a dominant individuality come striding in among your whims and fancies? Did it never seem like a pair of heavy boots trampling over your sprigged muslins? But I forgot—Uncle Francis was not a dominant individuality like—like some people."

With this inconclusive conclusion, Joyce rose

and questioned the shadowy presence no further that night.

The next day Mr. Eldridge left the "hydro-therapeutic establishment" for a large hotel on the shore of the Lake of Geneva not far from Montreux, a hotel with a famous cuisine which began at once to undo, as rapidly as possible, the benefit accruing from the previous treatment.

Dilke argued, persuaded, threatened, but all in vain. Mr. Eldridge would eat and drink, but as to being merry—that did not follow, and though he demanded the constant companionship of Dilke and his daughter, he by no means contributed to the gaiety of either nations or individuals.

One evening soon after their arrival, he went to his room for a nap before dinner, leaving Joyce to her own devices. Dilke found her standing on the steps looking off over the lake. The discouragement of her attitude touched him to the quick. The resemblance to a certain Da Vinci drawing came out strongly in the droop of her head and the doubtful smile about the corners of her lips as she looked up at his approach. The sunset was playing temptingly across the ripples of the lake, and Dilke, taking out his watch, suggested that they might have a short row before dinner.

"You do not think that it would be against the conventions?" Joyce queried, looking longingly at the stretch of illuminated water.

"Conventions," Dilke answered, "are only innovations to which we have grown accustomed. Let us make our own."

"Very well, then," said Joyce. "Let us go. I was thinking how pleasant it would be." As she spoke, she threw a long white wool cloak over her dress of blue muslin.

At the water's edge the boats lay tossing lightly. Earlier in the day there had been a high wind which had driven the spray over the boats, and pools of water still stood under the seats.

Joyce raised her slippered foot and lifted the soft frills of her skirt to step into the boat. Dilke looked down with marked disapproval in his eyes.

"You cannot wear those things in the boat," he said.

"Those things' are thicker than you think."

"Not unless my eyes deceive me. Don't you see that pool of water where your feet must rest? Let us go back!"

"Oh, no!"

"Oh, yes!" Dilke rejoined with emphasis.

"Why should we?"

"You will take cold."

"You overrate your responsibilities," exclaimed Joyce, with her smile of doubtful interpretation. "You are papa's medical adviser—not mine. If I am ever ill I shall resort to homœopathy."

Physicians of the old school see as much humour in the subject of homœopathy as a bull is able to discern in the red flag of the Spanish arena.

"I make no claim to be your medical adviser," Dilke answered stiffly; "and when you are ill you may play with any little white sugarplums that you choose; but I am responsible to your father for your not taking cold when you are under my charge."

"I shall not take cold," Joyce observed with airy assurance, preparing to step into the boat.

Dilke made no response, but pulling off his coat threw it into the pool of water under the seat. It was a more heroic action than Sir Walter's, for Raleigh probably had several dozen cloaks at home, and this was Dilke's best.

Joyce looked at him, a quick little frown contracting her slender eyebrows.

"Was it worth all that," she asked, "to put me in the wrong?"

"It is worth considerably more than that to ~~me~~ that you should not wet your feet," Dilke

answered, and added, "My professional reputation is at stake."

"Wait a minute, please," Joyce exclaimed, and sped across the lawn of the hotel. When she reappeared a few moments later her feet were shod in calfskin. Dilke helped her into the boat without comment. She picked up his coat, shook it and laid it across the bow to dry, then she took her seat in the stern. Dilke jumped in and took the oars.

"I behaved like a child," said Joyce; "but let us consider the episode ended. I dare say my conscience will have its revenge later, however. Émilie says that the modern conscience avails only to make us uncomfortable in doing the things which nevertheless we continue to do."

Dilke pulled a few strokes in silence till they were under the shadow of a wooded point which screened Joyce from the sunset light. Then he rested on his oars, and looked at her, looked and looked with throbbing pulses, till, feeling the necessity of breaking the silence, he said abruptly:

"Your cousin is strangely different from you."

"Yes," Joyce assented thoughtfully, and added, "She is very interesting."

Dilke smiled. "That is not exactly the point of difference which I had in mind," he said.

"I was thinking how much surer of being happy she was than you."

"I know that." Joyce shook her head ruefully as she spoke. "But you—how could you know—how could you guess?"

"From what I have seen of you and of her. She is a woman of objective ambitions. She eagerly desires certain things and strains every nerve to attain them. If she fails, she will turn her back decisively on those things and grasp at others more within her reach. You, on the other hand, whose ambition is to be rather than to do, or to have, are doomed to disappointment. You are constantly tampering with your temperament."

"Tampering with my temperament? Does that really mean anything at all?"

Joyce showed a mocking dimple in either cheek as she put the question. Dilke noted the dimples; but he would not heed the mockery.

"Yes," he said, "it does mean something. It is quite simple. It is that you are striving to be what you are not. Nature meant you to be an idealist and you wish to be a woman of the world. Nature decreed that you should be whimsical and you are determined to be logical. Altogether, you are like a watch striving to regulate its own mainspring."

"What you call tampering with my tempera-

ment," Joyce answered, still smiling, "I call mending my faults, and I must work at it myself, since there is no outside power capable of changing me."

"There might be." Dilke spoke the words half to himself, and looking over Joyce's head at the towers of Chillon rising like white ghosts in the gathering twilight. Their contrasted calmness cooled the hot blood rushing to his face. Joyce looked at him with raised questioning eyes.

"There might be?" she repeated.

Dilke drew in his oars, and leaning over them, returned Joyce's glance squarely. "Yes," he answered, "there might be love. There is such a power. To ignore it is to reduce life to a meaningless game between puppets. It is the primal ordinance, the first commandment. Some day you will learn it, and then you will not say so confidently that no outside power can change you."

The defiance in Dilke's eyes met no answer, for Joyce's glance had fallen.

"And what," she asked, "if this love which you invoke in my behalf proved no delicate-fingered jeweller but a clumsy blacksmith shattering with his heavy hand the wheels and springs of the watch, to which you are pleased to compare my character?"

Dilke drew a long breath. "Why, then, heaven help you! But at least you would have lived."

Dilke closed his lips, then opened them again as if to continue the subject, but evidently thought better of the matter, for he said abruptly:

"Look at the reflection of the sunset on the water dripping from my oars."

He raised the blades as he spoke and the bright drops fell like a shower of translucent opals into the lake. Joyce trailed her hand in the water, and bent her head to watch the ripples which floated in their wake.

Dilke felt himself drifting whither he would not, and yet was powerless to stem the tide. It had become so much a habit to speak his thoughts to Joyce that he found it necessary to put a ban upon thought itself lest it find its way into speech—for speech is epoch making.

Yet silence too has its dangers, and as they floated on and on in the gathering greyness, an atmosphere well nigh as significant as speech seemed to hang about them. A touch, a word, a breath, might have brought a crisis. Dilke's nerves were tense. It was almost a relief when he heard Joyce say:

"I think we'd better go in. Papa does not like to be kept waiting for his dinner."

"I have observed it," her companion assented

drily, and pulled with swift, strong strokes for the shore. He helped Joyce out of the boat without a word and lingered for several minutes alone. Then he went in.

When Dilke had dressed for dinner he went down to the reading room, where, as he had expected, he found Joyce and her father. To his surprise he perceived at once that Mr. Eldridge was in a towering passion—such a passion as he had not observed since that first evening of their acquaintance in New York.

On Mr. Eldridge's knee lay an open letter, which he struck now and then with his open hand, as if returning blow for blow. As Dilke came up to join the group, he heard Mr. Eldridge muttering something about "damned uncivil Dutchmen."

Dilke smiled. "You forget," he said, "that even Mr. Burke did not know how to draw an indictment against a whole nation."

"I'd have taught him how if he had come to me. I'd have taught him, by Jupiter! They are all alike from the Kaiser down."

"What is the matter? Has the Chancellor slighted you?"

"It is that boor of a Baron von Steinitz whom we saw in New York—Madame du Pont's friend, you remember, Joyce."

"Yes, I remember."

"Well, he writes asking you and me to come to his country house on the Rhine for ten days."

"I can imagine more deadly insults than that," Dilke observed.

"But he says nothing of you, and I asked Madame du Pont to write him that you were to be of our party."

"Is that all?" Dilke inquired, commenting to himself: "Madame du Pont probably never said a word about it. It would not have suited her plans to have me invited."

"It does not affect us, papa," Joyce answered, with quiet pride in her voice. "It is only themselves whom people injure when they are rude, and it is not as if we were compelled to go."

"But I am compelled to go. In a way I am compelled. I promised when he was in New York that I would go."

"Of course you should go. There is not a doubt of it," Dilke said. "There would not be the faintest reason for considering me in the matter under any circumstances; and as it happens, all this fits admirably with certain tentative plans of my own. Newbold has asked me to spend a fortnight with him Bohemianising in Paris, and I thought I should like to go if it met your convenience."

"It does not meet my convenience; but who

ever thinks of my convenience? I shall catch pneumonia in this damp Rhenish hole, and get an attack of gout from their infernal black bread and sauerkraut."

Dilke laughed. "If I thought that you would confine yourself to black bread and sauerkraut," he said, "I should not worry about you; but I am afraid that you will wash them down with more deleterious stuff. Miss Eldridge, I shall expect you to take my place as mentor, and to see that your father does not 'apply hot and rebellious liquors in his blood.'"

Joyce smiled. "A difficult task," she answered; "responsibility without authority, as someone complained of in an engagement, and I cannot hope to be as terrible a mentor as you were this evening about my going out in slippers."

"Now, Joyce," exploded her father, turning the vials of his wrath upon his daughter, "how often have I told you that I would not have you going about like that! Have you *no* sense?"

"I have a capital scheme for making myself missed," Dilke interposed, striving to avert the storm which threatened to overwhelm Joyce. "Every time that Miss Eldridge goes out shod in slippers you shall drink a quart of Burgundy. Then, when I rejoin you in Paris, my occupation

will not be so much of a sinecure as it has been up to this time."

"I tell you I cannot spare you!" Mr. Eldridge exclaimed violently. Joyce laid her hand on his shoulder, and spoke very low and quietly: "Yes, Papa, you can spare him. Don't you see he really wants to go, and I will do everything for you, as he says."

So the plan was made.

That night, when Joyce went up to her room, leaving her father reading the *Spectator*, Dilke followed her to the foot of the stairs to say good night. Joyce stopped, and stood with her hands behind her looking up at him shyly, like a child who hesitates to reopen the subject of his misdemeanors, yet cannot quite let it alone.

"Is your coat dry?"

"I don't know. I threw it down somewhere when I came in. The fact is, I had forgotten all about it."

"Then it will be full of wrinkles, and you will have no chance to have it pressed. When you reach Paris Mr. Newbold will laugh at it, and then you will say: 'I will tell you how it happened. I spoiled that coat in trying to save an obstinate young woman from wetting her feet, and she had not the grace even to say thank you.'"

"On the contrary, I shall say: 'That coat

accumulated those wrinkles in shrinking into its natural condition after being unduly puffed up by the attention which it received from a young woman, who had the thoughtfulness to hang it up to dry, and the magnanimity not to resent intrusive advice.' What nonsense!—I shall say nothing of the kind. I shall not speak of you in any connection whatsoever. I do not approve of mixing friendships. It is like mixing wines."

Joyce broke into a smile which showed the dimple in her left cheek. Dilke had learned to look for that dimple as a harbinger of peace and good will.

"Good bye," she said, "till we meet in Paris."

"Can I take any message from you to Madame du Pont?" Dilke asked. "I shall probably see her soon, as I had no time to make my dinner call before we left."

A shade fell on Joyce's manner, a hint of withdrawal, a suggestion of the stranger, which was always latent in her friendliest moments. The dimple disappeared. The eyes grew less bright, as if the candles behind them had been extinguished.

"No, thank you," she said, "I have written to Émilie to-day. Good night." And without another word she turned and left him.

Dilke stood watching her until she reached the turn of the stairs. Then he went hastily to the office and sent a telegram to Newbold. Afterward he bade farewell to Mr. Eldridge and finished his packing. The next morning he was off before either of the other members of the party was astir.

CHAPTER VIII

THE HOLDER OF THE CLAIM

STRANGE surroundings give perspective and enable a man to sink private griefs in a general sense of a world which knows not Joseph or his troubles.

Dilke determined not to go directly to Paris, but to stop at several of the French towns which lay on his road. He wished to be alone, to fight a feeling over which he had determined to win the mastery, and to strive to lose himself for a while in unfamiliar sights and the practise of an unfamiliar language.

He wandered about the old streets of Orléans and Bourges, and spent hours in the cathedral of Chartres. Still, at every street corner, he found himself confronted by the image of Joyce Eldridge. Clearly there was no gain in running away from the thought of her. Instead he resolved to accustom himself to it. He would enjoy his memory of her as an entity, and make that shadowy companionship a source of happiness, and still to himself he talked of his feeling for Joyce as friendship.

After three or four days of wandering, Dilke began to feel a craving for a human companion, a companion who spoke his native tongue, with whom it was possible to talk without so much thought given to vocabulary that there was nothing left to communicate.

He took the train for Paris, and with the expectation of seeing Newbold his spirits rose, not to boiling point, but from zero to ten above.

Newbold's studio was at the top of many weary flights of stone stairs, and Dilke was out of breath and out of patience before he reached it. In the darkness of the hall he was peering about for the name on the door, when he heard a well-known voice shouting from within:

"Too much care will turn a young man grey.
Too much care will turn an old man to clay."

"Much he knows about it!" muttered Dilke, as he banged on the door.

There is an irritation in having private experiences, which to us are distinctly individual, brushed away into the dust heap of the experiences of the race. For the first time in his life Dilke was learning the pressure of an overmastering care, and he did not enjoy this lyrical and jovial treatment of it. But the most churlish soul could not cherish resentment against Newbold. Dilke's irritation vanished

as he caught sight of him standing at the open door, palette in hand and a brush in his mouth.

Newbold was a man with a chivalrous soul and a romantic disposition which, if cased in a tall form and classic face, would have wrought itself out naturally and harmoniously; but how can a short and squat figure associate itself with romance, or a broad, flat Dutch countenance express chivalry without making itself ridiculous? Nature had imposed upon Newbold a comic part and he had accepted it as inevitable, only adding a touch of irony to the humour and a latent pungency to his jests.

If he had his periods of depression and despair, his exaltations and his lofty aspirations, he reserved them for periods of solitude and rooms where there were no mirrors.

"Oh, Tony, glad to see you!" Newbold exclaimed, getting rid of his brush somehow. "I want to show you the portrait of Miss Eldridge. Here, give me your valise. I have arranged a sofa bed for you in the little room; but first tell me what you think of the picture."

While Newbold was speaking, he led the way into the studio and cleared away a pile of green corduroy from an arm chair. "Sit down here," he added, "and let me turn the portrait to the light. There, is it like her?"

Dilke studied the picture with a delight which

made it difficult to speak. Yes, this was Joyce at her best. There was something in her carriage so free, so buoyant, that it suggested a flight of song birds. Her figure indeed was almost too slender, yet it held the head above it lightly like a flower. Her face suggested Shelley's in the delicacy of its contour, and the incorrigible unworldliness in the eyes which looked out from under the broad, low brow.

"Very like, I should say," Dilke answered; "that is her way of leaning forward as if she were eager for the next remark, yours or hers, she never cared which. I like it exceedingly; but after all, what do you care for the opinion of a layman?"

"That is precisely what I want. It is laymen who are to see the picture and to judge it. Naturally I wish it to please them. I should not be satisfied to have my work caviare to the general even to have it terrapin to the elect. There is something about the eyes," he added, looking at the picture with his eyes half shut, "which I have not succeeded in catching. That 'light that never was on sea or land,' that something too fleeting to be caught on canvas which is, after all, the essence of life. We painters can never give up trying to fix the unfixable, the sun on water, for instance, or the light in a woman's eyes."

"As a rule," said Dilke, "I prefer that things should not be too permanent. After a short time I can dispense with even the light in a woman's eyes, and the only permanent emotion is ennui."

"Ennui!" exclaimed Newbold scornfully. "Ennui, with all the enjoyment to be had out of life in general!"

"There is no such thing as life in general," retorted Dilke. "What is life as a generality? What is art as a generality?"

"Art?" answered Newbold, trapped by the catchword of his craft, "Someone has said that art is a corner of the world seen through a temperament."

"Exactly!" returned Dilke triumphantly. "So is life a corner of the world seen through a temperament. There is no such thing as a clear white light on humanity."

While Dilke was speaking, he was studying the picture. The face, with its characteristic enigmatical smile, the slightly lifted eyebrows, the half-parted lips. It was Joyce herself, and Dilke felt that he had done himself little good in fleeing from the original only to be thrown into daily companionship with its double on the canvas here.

"The dress is charming," he said at length, recognising it as the gown in which he had first seen Joyce in her father's library.

"Do you think so? I don't," Newbold answered. "I should have liked something with more colour and heavier folds; but Miss Eldridge had some sentiment about this white gown. Confound sentiment! It has no place in art."

"Indeed! I supposed there was quite an intimate connection."

"Oh, I mean family sentiment—sentimental sentiment. It happens that when a man offered himself to his future wife she wore a scarlet gown, and he presented her with a bunch of magenta roses. When her portrait is painted ten years later, gown and roses must both go in. Never mind what becomes of the poor artist!

"The architect fares even worse. He puts up a pure Colonial house and the owner insists on having a loggia on the second story because his daughter has associations with Italy."

Dilke laughed. "I am afraid that my sympathies are with the owners of the pictures and the houses," he said. "After all, it is they who must live with them."

"Yes; but it is the artists and architects who must be responsible for them. Don't you suppose that our reputation is as much to us as their comfort is to them?"

While Newbold spoke he was touching in a high light. Dilke's eyes wandered about the studio, and fell upon a sketch of Brandyce

seated in front of a campfire, his pith helmet pushed back from his face, which showed ruddier than life in the firelight.

Instead of answering Newbold's æsthetic complaint, he said suddenly: "You have been making a sketch of Brandyce, I see. How much do you know about him, Newbold?"

"Do you wish to be told what I know or what I surmise?"

"Both."

"I know, then, that he is the correspondent of a London paper—war correspondent, when there is a war—*omnium-gatherum* in times of peace. I know that he is accepted in the best society in Vienna, that his connections are excellent, that he has an uncle in the Cabinet, and that he is an entertaining companion."

"What do you surmise?"

"Are there not enough disagreeable *facts* in the world, without adding nasty surmises?"

"You surmise——?"

"If you will have it, I have a suspicion that there was some irregularity about his resignation from the army. One fellow hinted as much to me. In fact, he suggested that there was some affair which, if Brandyce's uncle had not been a high official, would have been investigated. There may be nothing whatever in it. I am sure I hope there is not."

Newbold hesitated a minute, and then turning away from the portrait, he said: "I have thought a great many times, Dilke, of our talk there on the hillside at Pieria and of the things which you said about Brandyce. I did not understand them then. They seemed to me overstrained; but I have met him twice since then, and naturally I looked at him more closely in the light of your suspicions. The more I studied him the more I felt that you were right. He is attractive, his manners are excellent, he is a capital comrade, but in spite of it all, is he a gentleman?"

It is curious how, if one carries a sore spot in his heart, all conversation has an irresistible tendency to alight and dance on it. This was a question which Dilke had blamed himself for being able neither to choke off nor to answer.

His part and Newbold's seemed strangely reversed since their conversation in Pieria. It was now Dilke who was inclined to be discreet and conservative.

He would not answer directly. Instead, he parried. "I am naturally prejudiced in his favour by his having saved my life. But, Newbold, what do you mean by a gentleman? It is difficult, isn't it, to say exactly what it is that constitutes a gentleman as distinguished

from a fine man. What is the essential—the quintessential quality?”

“I should say sensitiveness,” Newbold observed, stepping backward to get a longer perspective on his picture—“sensitiveness and simplicity——”

“Might a man lie and still be a gentleman?”

“He could not be in the *habit* of lying, because then he would be neither sensitive nor simple; but to lie once—I don’t know—the ideal is the bull’s-eye of a target which we cannot hope to hit every time.”

“Similes are misleading,” Dilke answered, “but I should say that the ideal is the first meridian from which we may measure our deviations. When I remember the deviations of which I have been guilty myself, I do not propose to play the Pharisee with any poor devil who has been overcome by sudden temptation.

“I did an idiotic thing once—worse than idiotic—let me call it by its true name—a dishonourable, a dishonest thing, and the story would not point a Sunday-school moral, for in a way all my material success has seemed to flow from it; but for all that it has carried its punishment. I wake at night and feel hot when I think of it. I would give years of my life to blot it out—perhaps Brandyce feels in

the same way—that is, if he really ever did anything——”

“You evidently do not care to express an opinion about Brandyce.”

“No, frankly, I do not. I find that putting a thing into words makes it much more definite in my own mind. I forgot myself once in that talk with you, and I have been sorry for it ever since. I am trying to think well of Brandyce. Of course, you see, you wish to think well of a man who has saved your life. I am sure that if there were ever anything that I could do for him, I would do it with all my heart. I would make great sacrifices. I wish,” he added after a moment’s pause, “that liking were a matter more under one’s own control.”

“I do not,” said Newbold. “I am glad to have one thing removed from the market place of obligation and left spontaneous.”

“Would you say the same of love?”

“Certainly.”

“Not I, then. Half the troubles in the world come from people’s loving when they ought not to, and the other half from their not being loved when they ought to be.”

Dilke rose as he spoke and walked to the corner of the studio to study the portrait of Joyce Eldridge from a different angle. “If you really want me to criticise,” he said, “I

should say that there was a shade too much of coldness in the expression. You have overdone the look of indifference. There is intellectual perception but very little sympathy, and sympathy is a marked characteristic.

Dilke's mind was fixed on a picture of a girl standing at the foot of a flight of stairs, her hands clasped behind her and her eyes looking up with a soft and timid appeal. Naturally Newbold had no such picture before him, and like most artists, he recognised the layman's ability to appreciate more than his right to criticise.

"Your comment is at once vague and iconoclastic," Newbold answered with a touch of stiffness; "one of those easy suggestions that the work is fundamentally wrong but otherwise charming. The soul of the painter is often cheered by such assurances. We grow accustomed to them; but as to Miss Eldridge, perhaps our conceptions of her character differ. I found her rather frosty."

"Frosty! Perhaps you would like to assume a glaze of frost yourself if you were compelled to live by the side of a volcano—Mr. Eldridge's temper——"

Dilke ended his sentence with an expressive shrug.

"You seem to take a great interest in the ice maiden," said Newbold.

"More or less," Dilke answered in a tone meant to be offhand, and unconscious of the offence which his comment on the picture had given. "Miss Eldridge is a personality, and personalities are rare on my horizon. Most people are as like as the bottles in a drug store. By the way, Newbold, if you are going home soon, why can you not arrange to come with us?"

"And play chess with the volcano while you attempt to thaw the ice maiden? The prospect does not sound attractive."

"You are out in your calculations there, old Truepenny. I am more afraid of the ice maiden than of the volcano. Ice can burn as well as fire——"

"Whew!" Newbold whistled. "You are in for a serious case. Do you mean to tell her about it?"

"Not for the whole round world!"

"Oh, I don't mean asking her to marry you. No poor and honourable young man does that. He simply tells the girl how *he* feels and finds out how *she* feels, and when she assures him that it will be only a pleasure to wait ten years for him, he calls himself a brute and her an angel, and so it is all arranged with no disparagement of his nice sense of propriety."

"Ouch! Newbold, you hurt," said Dilke,

with a grimace. "On the whole, I am very glad you are *not* to cross with us."

"So am I," Newbold interrupted.

"Too much care for others will never turn *your* hair grey," Dilke went on; "but I wish that I could learn your secret of perennial cheerfulness."

"And suppose," said Newbold, turning suddenly serious, "suppose you found that I had no secret to teach any man. Suppose the whole thing were a bluff. Suppose I found life a burden which on the whole it was easier to carry jauntily than solemnly—that the galled jade winced less if her withers were padded with a jest—what then?"

"Then," said Dilke, "I should think you the wisest man I ever knew. I have made a practice of going about like one in the wilderness crying 'Woe! Woe!' as if that ever helped anybody, as if on the contrary it did not infinitely and fundamentally hinder. I will take a leaf out of your book of wisdom. But, Newbold——"

"What is it?"

"Have you ever had any special experiences—anything like mine?"

Newbold was silent.

"Come, make a clean breast of it as I have done. Is there a woman——?"

For answer to the unfinished question, Newbold took up a canvas which had been standing with its face to the wall and set it on the easel. Dilke recognised it instantly as a sketch in pastel of Madame du Pont.

"I did it from memory," said Newbold. "Each day when they had gone I painted as long as I could see her face. Then I stopped and waited till next time."

Dilke walked closer to the picture. The figure was drawn full length, with one jewelled hand lifting slightly the trailing dress and one foot raised and resting on a cushion. Underneath it Newbold had scrawled in red chalk:

"Her feet are tender, for she sets her steps
Not on the earth, but on the hearts of men."

"Now you know," the artist said, and without another word he returned the sketch to the corner from which he had taken it.

"Of course you never told her," said Dilke.

"Of course nothing of the kind. Am I such a cad that I am unwilling to have a woman know that I admire her, simply because there is no chance of her returning the admiration? A man who is afraid to tell his love is not suffering from love at all, but from vanity. Certainly I told her. I told her that if, in all the time to come, I ever thought a fine thought, or if my

brush laid a good colour on canvas, it would be her influence working through me."

"And she—what did she say? Did she laugh at you?"

"Not at all. She put out both hands and said: 'It is a great thing to come into a man's life like that.' And then a wonderful smile came into her eyes."

"They are as green as emeralds," said Dilke.

"That is a very stupid comparison, my friend, and shows that you are not an artist."

"Or a lover."

"Or an observer. Emeralds are hard and bright. Her eyes are neither. They are green like the sea which changes colour when the cloud or the sun hangs over it."

"Your devotion to green eyes," Dilke answered, "is only temporary. As you told me long ago in Pieria, fickleness is the artist's birth-right, and your love of the beautiful will soon transfer itself to other eyes of an equally transcendental shade."

"When I said that," Newbold replied, scraping his palette, "I was talking of fancies, such as mark a boy's progress, like so many milestones, all pointing the way to the passion which, however it eventuates and whether it bring him good or ill, is to hold him forever in its grip. He

can no more escape it than he could escape from the clutches of a——”

Newbold was going on to say more when a banging knock sounded at the door, and in another instant Eustace Brandyce whirled in like a gale of wind from the outer world.

“Enter third conspirator!” he exclaimed. “How did you turn up over here, Dilke?”

“Oh, there is no turning up in Paris,” Dilke answered. “It is only an accident that everyone isn’t here all the time. Where are you flying to or from?”

“I’ve been on a walking trip in the Balkans and turned in five columns of copy to my paper as a result. I’m going to do the Paris studios now, and thought I might give Newbold here a puff in the way of business. Next month I’m off for the States again. When do you go back to the States?”

“I am travelling with friends, and we expect to sail from Hamburg on October 15th.”

“Perhaps I can make the same steamer if you don’t object.”

“By all means make the same steamer,” Dilke responded, reproaching himself that he could not force his mind to echo the cordiality of his tone.

“I almost envy you fellows going home,”

Newbold said; "but I forgot. It is not home to you, Brandyce, is it?"

"No; but you need not waste any sympathy on me on that account. My country is Bohemia, and wandering is second nature. I should feel 'cabined, cribbed, confined,' if I were compelled to settle down in one place. Did you ever think what an infernally dull time the Prodigal Son must have had in that well-conducted household of his father's when the fuss was all over? Depend upon it, if a sequel had been written it would have told how he endured it as long as he could and then went off husking again——"

"I suppose that I am rather a soft chap," Newbold answered; "but I confess that 'Home, Sweet Home' always brings the tears."

"Precisely, because you are in Paris and your home at a pleasing and picturesque distance. It is a significant fact that the author of those touching words was a Bohemian like myself. By the way, what have you on your easel now, Newbold?" Brandyce turned as he spoke to the portrait of Joyce Eldridge and took out his notebook. "By Jove! That's a beautiful girl! May I have a photograph of the picture for the papers?"

Newbold hesitated, while Dilke bit his lip and walked away to the other end of the studio.

"I don't know," Newbold said. "Of course it would be an excellent advertisement for me. Do you think that Mr. Eldridge would object, Dilke?"

"I should think that he would," Dilke answered without turning round; "but it will be a very simple matter to ask him."

Newbold detected the irritation in Dilke's voice, and turning briskly to Brandyce, he said: "I hope that you two have not forgotten the appetites which you accumulated in your camp. Dilke, pull out that packing box. You will find glass and china in the closet—broken most of it, but able to serve its turn still, if carefully handled. Brandyce, light the charcoal fire, will you? I will be back in a minute."

When Newbold reappeared, he carried a long roll of bread and a chicken with yellow legs protruding from one end of a brown-paper parcel and a blue head hanging limp from the other. A flask of red wine was under his arm, and from his pocket he drew out a package of fresh butter.

"Now," he exclaimed, "for our breakfast with the fork! It is lucky that there are only three of us, for that is just the number of my implements. Put on the frying pan, Brandyce! This biped must be split for broiling. Here, you

cut off his head, will you? I have an æsthetic repulsion to decapitation."

It was a gay little party which gathered round the packing-box table, and Brandyce was the life of it. No man told a better story, no man had had more interesting experiences, no man had a keener relish for another man's jest.

"You are certainly a man of talent, Newbold," Brandyce observed at the end of the meal. "Who would expect an artist to be a cook, and a good cook at that? Have you any other accomplishments?"

"My forte," said Newbold, "is making a camp bed. I can lay the boughs so that they are softer than most spring mattresses. What do you do best, Dilke?"

"Nothing, unless it is to bandage a burn, and unfortunately I cannot do that for myself with my left hand." Dilke looked ruefully at his right thumb, on which stood out a large blister—the result of his attempt to assist Newbold.

"What do *you* do best, Brandyce? I don't mean foolish things like those about which we have been talking, but real things——"

Brandyce pondered for a moment. Then he said: "I think that I tell a lie better than I do anything else. In fact, the beautiful and rounded completeness of my falsehoods casts all my other accomplishments into the shade."

"Now I," interrupted Newbold, embarrassed by a recollection of his talk with Dilke on this subject, and anxious to change the impression left by Brandyce's words, "I cannot *tell* a lie. My eyes betray me and my tongue trips at the critical moment; but give me a pen and a sheet of paper, with the eyes of the liee far off, and I can rise to great heights. I have hopes of my future, for though the profession of lying is overcrowded, there is always room at the top."

"Perhaps," said Dilke, "brushes may lie as well as pens."

"They may," Newbold answered unperturbed, "or they may tell a more beautiful truth than any that Nature ever had the wit to devise."

"Ah!" exclaimed Brandyce, "that accounts for the portrait on the easel, that Miss—Miss—what is her name?"

"Eldridge," replied Newbold, while Dilke sat stonily silent.

"I suspected from the beginning," Brandyce went on, "that you were idealising. Now tell me truthfully; is she as lovely as that in real life?"

"You must ask Dilke," the artist answered with some mischief in his heart. "Dilke sees her every day and in morning dress, which after all is the severest test of beauty."

"You see this vision every day? Lucky dog! How does it come about?"

Dilke shot a wrathful glance at Newbold, but saw no way out of the situation except through frankness.

"I am travelling with her father as his physician," he answered, turning to Brandyce. "Naturally I see his daughter often——"

"And you are going back to America with them, I suppose."

"I expect to do so."

"That decides me. I shall sail from Hamburg on the 15th. *Au revoir*, then," he added, rising, "and to you, Newbold, I suppose it is good bye, till we stumble over each other in unexpected fashion in some corner of the world. People are so sure to meet nowadays that parting loses all its melancholy—I might almost say all its interest."

"Now you have done it!" exclaimed Dilke resentfully as Newbold returned after escorting his visitor to the door.

Newbold only laughed. "Don't blame me, my dear fellow, blame destiny! You know you said long ago that you felt sure that fate would throw you together again."

"It has," said Dilke, and relapsed into silence.

CHAPTER IX

THE PASTEBOARD HELMET

DON QUIXOTE made a pasteboard helmet which he believed strong enough to withstand the stroke of a giant. To prove his theory he struck it a blow which smashed the thing to bits. Undismayed by the result, he put it together again, and assured himself that this time it was strong enough; but he did not give it another blow to prove it.

So it was with Dilke. He felt confident that he was master of himself. He was sure that his calmness would bear any strain that could be put upon it. Only he regretted that he must meet Joyce Eldridge again. He would have liked to embark on a sailing vessel for a journey around the world, to join an Arctic expedition, or investigate the interior of Patagonia rather than rejoin the Eldridges as he had promised to do on this, the second evening after their arrival in Paris.

The visit to the German castle had evidently not been a success, for Mr. Eldridge's last letter had been full of complaints, written in ill

humour, and with a suggestion of reproach of Dilke, to be traced in the accounts of his need of medical attendance.

As Dilke read it he smiled to himself at its unreason. Then a quick wave of seriousness followed, as he reflected on the amount of impatience which must have been vented by Mr. Eldridge upon his daughter, and he felt really like a deserter in leaving her to bear the brunt of it alone.

A tumult of conflicting thoughts swept through his mind at the prospect of the meeting to-night. He was full of misgivings. He was glad. He was sorry. He did not know how he felt. The pasteboard helmet creaked in his hands. The seams gaped, and still he assured himself that it was safe and serviceable.

The Eldridges were staying at a small hotel on the rue de Rivoli, a hotel where privacy was esteemed worth paying for at an exorbitant rate.

It was nine o'clock in the evening when Dilke said good bye to Newbold and hailed a fiacre. The night was wet and the buildings reflected themselves in the slippery pavement as in a polished floor. A mist hung over the garden of the Tuilleries and the blackness was stabbed here and there by stiletto points of electric light.

The Eldridges' private sitting room showed doubly cheerful after the chill darkness outside.

Dilke was almost dazzled by its brightness and experienced a sudden rise of spirits from the mere surroundings.

Madame du Pont and Joyce were seated in one corner before a large mirror which duplicated their figures and gave the effect of a party, though the only visitors were an Englishman and a young Frenchman who had been dining with them. Dilke was secretly disappointed. His thoughts had been so full of Joyce that he had dwelt upon this meeting, had counted on finding her alone with her father and watching her expression as she greeted him. Now everything was conventional and commonplace. "Well," he told himself, "it is best so; conventions are a great help to self-command."

As Dilke entered, the room seemed only a setting for Joyce in her gown of pale green crêpe embroidered with lilies and cut low so that her rounded throat looked like another lily rising from its greenness. Her head turned slowly at the sound of his entrance, and the colour rose in her cheeks and flushed the tips of her delicate ears as she came forward to greet him. She stretched out a cold little hand in welcome; but her eyes drooped so that their meaning was hidden as Dilke looked down upon them from his greater height.

The visitors rose, and Madame du Pont

brushed aside the folds of her lace robe to make room for the newcomer near her; but he declined to avail himself of the suggested opportunity, as he perceived that she was carrying on an animated conversation in French with the man next her.

Dilke's command of French was limited to monosyllables, with a few variants for business purposes. He could buy tickets and inquire the names of streets, but he realised that he had no equipment for drawing-room conversation.

Joyce, on the contrary, talked with an astonishing freedom, and an inaccuracy so glaring that it did not suggest any attempt to speak the language, but rather a desire to establish a friendly medium of communication with fellow human beings, between whom and herself an unfortunate barrier had been raised. The manner which accompanied it was so winning, that verbs and genders fell into their place of due subordination, and the Frenchman found an additional piquancy in her American accent.

With Madame du Pont the case was quite different. Her French could be detected as that of a foreigner only by a slightly conscious and academic quality, which marked it as acquired after childhood; but she found it

easier to convey the shadings of what she wished to say in French than in her native tongue. Now, as she talked, her spirits were at their highest, her laugh at its lightest. Nevertheless Dilke did not find himself attracted. He chose from preference the seat next Joyce, and dropped into it with a curious sense of finding himself at home.

"And the German visit?" he began.

Joyce's mouth drooped and her eyebrows rose.

"Ah!" Dilke exclaimed, "the visit, I see, was not a success. I expected as much from the beginning."

Joyce studied him with her little puckering frown.

"Are you one of those objectionable psychic people who know in advance the things which the rest of us discover too soon?"

"Objectionable, doubtless," Dilke answered, "but a soothsayer only under very obvious conditions. I know a German household; I know your father; I know you—there was no miracle in foreseeing the result of the combination. In fact, I fancy that I could describe your visit to you as well as if I had been on the spot."

"You don't need to go into a trance, do you?"

"Not in the least. It fell out in this way.

You arrived at the castle in a state bordering on nervous prostration. You had no fear of the Baron, but you dreaded the servants. You did not know what fees you should give them, nor what services you should expect from the different ones."

"You are a mind reader!"

"Next, you were uncertain about your father. Oh, there is no need of keeping up pretences between you and me. Frankness is essential. He makes you apprehensive on all social occasions. He is a man of precarious speech and impossible silences. He has never learned the conversational value of the question mark, and he issues his opinions as if they were papal bulls, to be met only by assent or defiance."

"Really, you ought not to be saying this to me," Joyce objected faintly.

"But it is true. Assume for the moment that I am Henry, and grant me a brother's privilege of speaking the truth."

"It is in his truthful moods that I like Henry least, and I am afraid that I shall like you still less if you adopt his rôle."

"Nevertheless, and in spite of incurring that awful risk, I shall do it. You have been growing thin and white since I have been away. Soon you will repress yourself into a ghost, a restrained shadow. You must speak freely to

someone, and you must let someone speak freely to you. Is it a bargain?"

Joyce nodded, brightening.

"Then let me tell you more about your visit. There was the Baron, a gentleman with a waist as broad as his accent, and he had a son in the army."

"Somebody told you that!"

"Not at all. There always is a son in the army, and he is generally visiting at the ancestral castle on furlough. This particular son had fierce military mustachios which he twirled while he was talking, as if he would eat an enemy at short notice; but he had a soft heart nevertheless in times of peace, and he promptly fell in love with you."

Here Dilke paused and looked inquiringly at Joyce. Like most mind readers, he was very dependent on such data as expression and involuntary movements of assent or dissent for his divination; but Joyce's features were under good control, and he was obliged to proceed slowly and tentatively.

"You would have found his attentions rather diverting than otherwise, except that you were in constant apprehension of strained relations between your father and the Baron. This kept your nerves somewhat tense, and when, near the end of the visit, the devotion of the Baron's son

found its way to direct and somewhat violent speech——”

Joyce looked up in amazement. Then, perceiving the smile in Dilke's eyes, she burst into unrestrained laughter.

“You are a wizard,” she said, “but like most of your craft you are half a fraud, and you frequently miss your guess. Let us go over to papa. I see by his expression that he thinks you are neglecting him.”

Rising, she led the way to the table beside which Mr. Eldridge sat studying a map of Paris and its environs, under the light pulled close to his elbow.

Mr. Eldridge growled out a welcome, the surliness of which was explained by his foot outstretched on a chair before him.

“Ah!” observed Dilke, studying his patient, “I see that you have been taking literally the advice which I gave you before we parted in Switzerland. I intended it humorously, but my efforts in that line are seldom successful. How many bottles of old wine did you consume at the *Schloss* to bring you to this pass?”

“You ought to have stayed with us,” Mr. Eldridge asserted, with the air of one who has found a grievance, and does not intend to be robbed of it.

“You forget, Papa,” said his daughter, “it was

we who left Doctor Dilke, not he who deserted us."

"Go on, Joyce. Of course it was my fault. Whatever happens, you always try to put me in the wrong."

Joyce waited, with the gentle weariness familiar in the mother of a fractious child, for the querulousness to blow by. She had grown accustomed to her father's manner, and vaguely appreciated that it covered a genuine affection; but in the presence of strangers it wounded her to the quick, and for some reason the sympathy which she read in Dilke's eyes was harder to bear than the harshness which caused it.

"Newbold is hoping that you will bring Miss Eldridge soon to see the portrait," said Dilke, thinking to change the current of Mr. Eldridge's thought.

"A portrait of Miss Eldridge?" inquired the young Englishman, who had followed Joyce to the table.

"Yes," said Dilke, "an excellent likeness, and therefore, it is needless to say, a charming picture, which has just been painted by Mr. Brackett Newbold."

"Newbold!" echoed young Cholmondeley, "I have heard that name somewhere. Was he a friend of a man named Brandyce—at one time captain in the service?"

"He is, I believe," Dilke answered. "Do you know Brandyce?"

"Yes, that is I did. Is he a friend of yours?"

Dilke hesitated a moment. If he ignored any special relation to Brandyce, he might learn certain things concerning which his curiosity was much aroused; but loyalty conquered.

"I don't know that I can claim him as a friend," he replied, "but he saved my life."

"Oh, but that is very interesting!" Cholmondeley exclaimed, and Joyce raised her eyes expectantly; then, reading a visible reluctance in Dilke's face, she said quickly: "We will not ask you about it. Probably the subject is a painful one. For myself I hate to dwell upon past dangers. It makes the future seem more full of risks."

"Tell on, tell on!" burst out Mr. Eldridge, who had no idea of being balked of news by his daughter's hesitant scruples.

Dilke shut his lips and squared his chin. He did not like the tone of command, nor allow for the fact that peremptoriness and profanity are only the outward and visible signs of an inward and unspiritual condition.

Mr. Eldridge treated his ailments as if they were an insult from Nature, a distinct grievance which constituted a sufficient reason for ill temper to be vented somewhere, and since it

could not very well be inflicted upon Nature, who showed herself singularly indifferent, he deflected his wrath to his daughter.

"Papa has suffered a great deal with his gout," she said with timid appeal in her eyes, striving to avert an impending conflict by propitiating the stronger power.

Instantly the physician in Dilke asserted itself, and the physician cannot be offended; the manifestation of ill temper being to him only one more pathological phenomenon.

"Your foot is rather painful, I am afraid, Mr. Eldridge," he said, "but perhaps you will feel better afterward. Whatever the trouble is, it is better at the surface than suppressed."

"I prefer it suppressed entirely," Mr. Eldridge observed drily.

His good humour was awakening already under the influence of the doctor's return.

"That's right," said Dilke; "I agree with you, and we will proceed to try to suppress it, not by driving it in, but by driving it out. First we will put on a hot fomentation, then we will bind up the foot in cotton wool and cover it with oiled silk. After that I will find some wine of colchicum that I have in my trunk. I suppose the trunk has come——"

Joyce nodded.

"Then we will let him have some of that,

and I think we shall soon see a change for the better."

"I wish you would tell us about that man's saving your life," Mr. Eldridge petitioned quite humbly. "I haven't heard an interesting remark since you left."

"Of course," Dilke answered, "I will tell you if you really care to hear about it; but I remember an old tutor of mine who said to me once: 'Stop talking about yourself one minute before the listeners are bored.' 'How can I tell?' I asked him. 'Precisely; how can you?' he observed. 'Therein lies the gist of my advice.' I have tried to remember and act upon it ever since."

"You *know* that we are interested," said Joyce. "Please tell us all about it."

She sank into a deep arm chair as she spoke and young Cholmondeley leaned against the mantel.

"There is not much to tell," Dilke began. "So far as I am concerned, it is a story of stupidity, pure and simple. Once, when I was camping, I fell over a precipice."

"It is a wonder you were not killed outright," said Mr. Eldridge. "You are always doing foolhardy things."

"Yes," answered Dilke, "but you make that observation in regard to so many things, that if I heeded you I should take to knitting in

a rocking chair as the only prudent occupation. For myself, I agree with Thoreau that a man sits as many risks as he runs. However, I started to tell you about Brandyce."

Joyce leaned forward eagerly with tightly clasped hands and eyes fixed full on the speaker.

Dilke was conscious of a mean wish that he had never begun the story. Never before had those eyes been fixed so intently upon him. No exploit of his, he thought, could have had power to draw forth that eager, questioning glance. Still he went on with a tolerably steady tone, and told the story from beginning to end, giving Brandyce full credit at every step.

"He always was a ready-witted chap," exclaimed Cholmondeley, when Dilke had finished.

"You owe your life to him, don't you?" said Joyce, musingly.

"Undoubtedly."

"Are you glad to owe it to him?"

Dilke started. Was there a wireless telegraphy between him and this girl that she should divine his inmost thoughts?

Joyce Eldridge had a quality of perpetual surprise. Her manner was cool and soft as snow. Her grey eyes were generally held rather down as if she had been convent bred. Then suddenly the lids would lift, and with a round,

direct gaze she would shoot an arrow straight to the bull's-eye. It was so now.

"I don't know," said Dilke, evasively. "I should be obliged first to settle the question whether life is a boon or an obligation."

"An opportunity, perhaps," Joyce suggested, withdrawing a little as she observed Dilke's withdrawal. It was characteristic of her that for every step forward in an approach to intimacy, she took two backward. She might have a heart somewhere; but it was not to be looked for on her sleeve.

"I should call it rather a prize package," said Dilke. "A man puts his hand into the bag and grasps he knows not what—an opportunity it may be, or a disappointment, as chance wills."

"Do you believe in his right to throw it away, as he would a prize package, if it does not please him?" asked the Englishman.

"I don't say that. There are others to be considered. It may be his duty to accept the disappointment and make the best of it. At the worst, it is soon over. If immortality were an established fact I should regard it as the crowning injustice of life."

"Oh, come, come, Dilke!" protested Mr. Eldridge, who was quite orthodox in the intervals of his profanities.

"You would enjoy an immortality of gout, perhaps," said Dilke, watching Mr. Eldridge's scowl as a new twinge seized his foot.

"That is a bodily ailment and would cease with the body."

"As would most individual characteristics, good as well as bad," Dilke answered.

"But to return to Mr. Brandyce," Joyce rushed in, seeing trouble ahead if the talk drifted further in this line. "I wish you would tell us more of him. It is a comfort to find that there are such men in these prosaic days."

"You may have the opportunity of meeting Brandyce and judging him for yourself," Dilke answered with a touch of constraint in his voice. "There is a possibility that he may cross with us. He talks of sailing on the 15th."

Joyce coloured brightly. "I am very glad," she said.

For two weeks Dilke had been assuring himself that he was not in love with Joyce Eldridge. He had enumerated her faults, clearly enough detected, he had dwelt upon her coolness toward him, and told himself that he was not the man to die of unrequited affection. He had pointed out that marriage was not for him at present under any conditions; and now, in the twinkling of an eye, all these sophistries were swept away as he looked at her and saw that her

thoughts were dwelling with eager interest upon Brandyce and the prospect of meeting him. All at once the pasteboard helmet gave way, fell to pieces at his feet, and Dilke knew that love had struck the blow.

CHAPTER X

WOMAN'S MISSION

"THE mission of woman is the gracious acceptance of the services of man."

Dilke made this observation as Joyce declined his assistance in putting on her jacket.

They were waiting at the Pont Royal to take the river steamer for St. Cloud. Madame du Pont was standing at a little distance talking with her uncle. They were arranging the details of her crossing the ocean with his party, as some of her affairs and investments in America needed her personal attention.

Mr. Eldridge drew out his watch and looked at it with some traces of his old irritability. Newbold was late, and Mr. Eldridge detested unpunctuality.

Personally Dilke was sorry that Newbold was to be of the party. Dilke preferred in general, as he had told Joyce, not to mix friendships, and in particular he felt that there would be a constraint in Newbold's presence owing to a consciousness on both sides of past confidences. He wished that he had kept his troubles and prob-

lems to himself. "Slave of the spoken, lord of the unspoken word." How often he had said that over to himself and how little he had acted upon it!

While he was in Newbold's presence he had steadfastly resolved to adopt the artist's jovial philosophy of life; but to-day he felt a peculiar reaction of depression. Our habits are like the French aristocracy—nothing short of a revolution can overthrow their power.

"The mission of woman to accept the services of man?" Joyce repeated in answer to Dilke's remark, and added scornfully, "You don't believe that."

"Oh, no, certainly not; why do I not?"

That is the sort of response which men make to drooping feminine eyes. They do not talk to each other in that fashion.

"Because——" Joyce began, and then interrupted herself with: "There is Mr. Newbold! We must hurry a little if we are to catch this boat."

"Newbold always catches everything," Dilke answered; "but he catches it by the tail. Nothing annoys him more than to find himself with five minutes to spare."

The artist was in his highest spirits, and seemed to find the trip on the river quite the most delightful thing that could have been

planned, though for that matter if the expedition had been to Montmartre or Père La Chaise, he would have found equal cause for exhilaration, especially if Madame du Pont had been of the party. His enjoyment of most things was purely subjective, and consisted in eliminating the unpleasant side and dwelling on the other.

And yet there are worse things in the world, even objectively considered, than floating through the heart of Paris in sunshiny weather, slipping past the bridges and the islands, with the gilded dome of the Invalides glistening in the distance and two charming American women in the foreground.

"Oh, look!" cried Joyce, as they passed the Île des Cygnes, where swans no more disport themselves. "See Liberty enlightening Paris just as she does New York!"

"Yes," replied Newbold, "it makes one think of Madame Roland. On the whole, of all the crimes wrought in the name of liberty, Bartholdi's is the most execrable."

"It must be very uncomfortable to be an artist," Madame du Pont observed; "you see so many faults that forbid you to enjoy things which the rest of us find quite inspiring."

"Not at all," Newbold protested stoutly; "we enjoy as many other things which most people

find ugly—human gargoyles, and old ash heaps with their nice shaded greys and purples.”

“Nine-tenths of your enjoyment in these things is pure conceit,” volunteered Dilke combatively. “You are secretly pleased that other people do not find them beautiful, and you are thinking what a fine fellow you are that you do.”

Newbold laughed lightly, wrinkling his nose and showing his white teeth. “Very well,” he answered, “have it any way you like. I am not for tracking my sensations to their lair like that. I am quite satisfied to enjoy without asking why, and as for vanity, it is as good a foundation for enjoyment as any other. Don’t you think so, Miss Eldridge?”

Instead of answering his question, Joyce asked another. “What is woman’s mission, Mr. Newbold?”

“Don’t propound problems on a pleasure trip, my dear,” said her father, who till now had been occupied in checking off the famous buildings in his Baedeker. He never felt that he had seen a sight till he had set a cross against it—probably a reminiscence of his banking experience and constituting a sort of receipt from memory.

“But I want to know, Papa,” Joyce answered, smiling. “Doctor Dilke and I were discussing the matter when Mr. Newbold came in. I don’t know exactly what I think.”

"Woman's mission," said Newbold, "is not to think, but to be."

Joyce laughed. "Doctor Dilke was just telling me that her mission was gracious acceptance of what man could do for her. I suppose from your remark that we are to include thinking."

"Of course," said Mr. Eldridge, as if the suggestion were too obvious to bear discussion.

"And are we to be equally grateful whether the service pleases us or not, and however much we may happen to disagree with the thinking?"

Madame du Pont's suddenly lifted eyes carried a shaft of derisive laughter.

Newbold threw back his head in a way frequent with him when he heard anything which pleased him; half closing his eyes and dilating his nostrils, as if to breathe in the aroma of the jest.

"Not grateful, perhaps," said Dilke answering his own reflections rather than the speaker's, as is common among men. "Heaven knows gratitude is not a bellboy to be summoned by pressing a button; but *gracious*, acknowledging the intention to serve you."

"And then," said Newbold answering *his* own reflections, "you have no need of thought. You have divine intuitions."

"Humbug, Newbold!" exclaimed Dilke. "In-

tuitions are opinions which the holder has not taken the trouble to submit to the processes of reason, and correspondingly worthless. Take notice, Miss Eldridge, that it was not I who made such an accusation against your sex."

"That is the point of view of the hardened materialist," said Newbold. "I regard intuition as a reasoning process too swift and subtle to be reduced to logical terms, as smoke is the one thing in the world more subtle than water. It can rise above its source, where water cannot follow."

"Except as it evaporates like steam," said Dilke, pugnaciously.

While these young people had been using their tongues instead of their eyes, the little boat had been puffing its way along, with a stop here and there at a bridge, past the thick clustering edifices of Paris, and out into the wider outlook where distant hills peeped above the buildings on the bank and the river showed bluer under the unsmoked skies. And now St. Cloud was in sight—St. Cloud with its park and its leveled château and its beautiful church. To which should they betake themselves first?

Mr. Eldridge settled the matter swiftly and imperatively by announcing that they would have luncheon. No sight-seeing for him without a comfortable meal as a foundation. They

found their way to the Pavillon Bleu from the boat landing, and seated themselves around a little table. Mr. Eldridge picked up the bill of fare and devoted a business-like consideration to ordering the meal.

"Doctor, can I have some filet?" he asked, frankly bored with the conversation which he had caught from time to time; and as usual blaming Joyce for allowing it to take such a silly turn. To Mr. Eldridge's mind everything was silly which had no practical bearing.

Dilke looked doubtful. "*Filet aux champignons, garçon!*" said Mr. Eldridge authoritatively, "and a bottle of Burgundy!"

Dilke looked deprecatingly at Joyce, and she returned the glance with the sympathy of a common powerlessness.

Newbold intercepted the look and placed his own interpretation upon it. The reason why Newbold saw so much was that few believed him capable of seeing anything, and no one ever got the benefit of the things which he did see.

"Have you been to the theatres much here in Paris, Miss Eldridge?" Newbold asked by way of filling the slight, awkward pause after the filet episode.

"No," said Joyce, "I do not care for French drama."

"Curious!" said Newbold, "I find it the only

drama in the modern world. It has such finesse, such art of climax. What is lacking?"

"Morals," said Dilke, taking up the cudgels.

"Ah, of course, if you drag in morals."

"I do not drag in morals. I simply decline to throw them out of the window."

"But in the interest of art——"

"It is in the interest of art that I am speaking. Standards of life universally accepted are essential to the making of either comedy or tragedy, because it is variations from those standards which stir one's pity or amusement."

Newbold was opening his lips to reply when Mr. Eldridge exclaimed: "Great Scott! I have a telegram for you, Dilke. I forgot all about it."

"Thank you," said Dilke, taking the telegram and laying it unopened beside his place.

"Doctor Dilke," said Madame du Pont, with a swift return to practical life, "don't pretend to be so superior to the natural human impulse of curiosity. You know that you are consumed with curiosity to know what is in that telegram."

"Not I," Dilke answered. "I have rarely received a telegram which did not contain news which I would prefer not to read. Why hasten the unpleasant moment?"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mr. Eldridge impatiently. "It's not business to neglect a telegram. Open it at once!"

Again the glance of mutual comprehension passed between Joyce and Dilke. Again Newbold noted it and laid it aside for future reference.

"With your permission, then," said Dilke, and tore open the envelope. "It is from Captain Brandyce," he observed as he folded the telegram. "He asks me to secure a stateroom for him on our steamer."

"A whole stateroom!" commented Mr. Eldridge. "I call that extravagant."

"Brandyce must have had a run of luck," said Newbold to himself. "He borrowed five pounds of me and has not returned it yet."

"So Captain Brandyce is to cross with us!" exclaimed Joyce. "Shall I find him amusing?"

"I fear," said Newbold, stroking his little pointed beard contemplatively, "that I do not always know whether people are amusing. Amusingness depends so much on the person to be amused, you know. How can you tell?"

"Do people invite him on social occasions or do they only speak well of him when he is not present?" queried Madame du Pont. "That is the test. I am always suspicious of a man whom I never meet anywhere, and whom I constantly hear spoken of as 'dear old so and so.'"

"Brandyce is invited on social occasions, and I never heard him alluded to as 'dear old Brandyce,'" said Dilke.

"Then I fancy that I shall like him," said Joyce, smiling.

Joyce's remark stung Dilke, and luncheon being ended he rose and proposed a stroll in the park. Joyce rose also, but her father drew out two cigars. "You and Émilie and Dilke may go," he said to his daughter; "but Mr. Newbold has seen it all" (Mr. Eldridge could not imagine any advantage in seeing a thing twice when he had once checked it off). "He, I am sure, would rather have a comfortable smoke here with me. A park is a park the world over, and as for a church, I've seen so many that they are just a jumble in my head."

Newbold bowed assent; but managed to convey a glance of comic resignation toward Dilke, a glance which said as plainly as words, "I told you how it would be."

After Madame du Pont, Joyce and Dilke had left, the talk fell flat. Every subject which interested Newbold failed to interest Mr. Eldridge, so at last it fell into a monologue by the host on the American banking system, which concerned Newbold about as much as the currency in Mars.

He found answers uncalled for, however, and that left him able to carry on an independent train of thought while Mr. Eldridge talked. He fell to speculating a good deal on Dilke and on

his position in regard to the Eldridges. When he first heard of that young man's good fortune in finding such a patron he was inclined to be envious; but time softens to us the prosperity of our friends by developing its attendant inconveniences, and as Newbold looked into the future, he could see many possible inconveniences and embarrassments for Dilke.

Joyce seemed to be on the borderland of serious interest, but would she ever cross the border? Now she visibly swayed toward Dilke, now away from him. A breath of wind might blow them together or separate them forever. A delicate situation, and likely to be further complicated by the introduction of Brandyce into the drama. Yes, Brandyce was distinctly a factor to be reckoned with. Impossible to say how he would impress a girl like Joyce Eldridge.

As he recalled her looks to-day, he felt that he could understand the strength of Dilke's sentiment. The elusive quality of her beauty was a distinct charm in itself. On the whole, he was glad that he was not to be further entangled in this already too complicated affair.

After Mr. Eldridge had been discoursing on banking for an interminable half hour, Newbold caught sight of a black dress moving toward them.

"Why, there is Madame du Pont!" he exclaimed, rising.

"What brought you back so soon, Émilie?" asked Mr. Eldridge as Madame du Pont came up the steps alone.

"Old age, Uncle. I found myself unable to keep pace with Joyce and Doctor Dilke. I went to the cascades; but I had no courage for the church. They insisted on coming back with me; but I would not let them come beyond the turn of the path."

"Please sit down here," urged Newbold, moving a chair where the sunlight was falling full.

"Thank you, but the light is rather bright there."

"You should always sit in a blaze of sunshine. You seem a part of it."

"I think I will walk a little, myself," said Mr. Eldridge. No one attempted to dissuade him, and he strolled away with a freshly lighted cigar. When he was gone Newbold drew his chair nearer Madame du Pont.

"This is perhaps the last time that I shall see you alone before you sail. That is nothing to you; but it is a great deal to me. You do not care for me. Tell me why."

"We are too different, my friend."

"I might change."

"For the worse, perhaps, if it were to make you more like me."

Newbold shook his head in quick negative.

"No matter. You could not do it if you wished ever so much. We were not born under the same star. I am a worldly woman. This is neither a confession nor a boast. It is the simple truth. I should never be satisfied with the life which you could offer me. I worship success."

"Are the gates of success barred to me forever?" Newbold asked with a smile which for once had something of bitterness in it.

"Of the success for which I care—yes," Madame du Pont went on kindly, but firmly. "You paint well. You will paint better; but you will always live in some queer corner and dine on a packing box. I like to dine on a packing box—once—I should hate it and you if I had to do it always."

"And why may I not make money like other men?"

"Because you will not conform. You will make no compromises, and compromise is the condition of success."

"You are very right, Madame. I will not have success at that cost. I will do my work just as well as I can do it. If the public will not have it—why, that is its own affair. But you—surely you can see that it is better for a man to do his best work and take what comes

of it than to juggle with his artistic conscience and paint pot boilers."

"Oh, it is not any violation of your artistic conscience for which I would ask—only a greater pliancy in meeting men and women and trying to please them."

"You, at least, have no reason to complain——"

"No, but I should like to see you equally anxious to please others."

"Then there would be no compliment in it."

"Ah!" said Madame du Pont with an enchanting smile, "but I should not know, and when I saw you popular, I should say: 'There is a man whom everyone admires, and he admires me.' Then your admiration would be trebled in value. Here come Joyce and Doctor Dilke."

There was a certain relief in Madame du Pont's tone as she made the announcement. Her gift lay in skating over thin ice, and she felt that she was in danger of breaking through and losing control of the situation.

Newbold turned quickly at her words and saw the two advancing toward them. Joyce was carrying a bunch of wild flowers and her cheeks were red; but she came up rather eagerly to join Newbold and made a point of addressing

most of her conversation to him till they took the train for Paris.

Newbold himself was not sorry for this. He felt that all further talk with Madame du Pont was worse than useless—painful to him and incapable of effect upon her. He was glad when he bade her good bye at the hotel on the rue de Rivoli, where she was to dine with her cousin. He made his way hastily back to his studio, determined to stifle his sorrows in work till night fell.

On his table he found a letter. He opened it with indifference; an indifference which changed to incredulous delight as he read. The note contained a commission for the decoration of the main hall in one of the largest houses in Washington, a mansion to be occupied on its completion by the Senator who now wrote offering Newbold the work, and giving him three months in which to complete it.

The artist laid down the letter and stood in the middle of the floor absently stroking his beard. Then he went to the corner, drew out Madame du Pont's portrait and set it on the easel.

"I know how this order came to me," he murmured, half aloud, addressing the portrait. "It came through you, through some of your Washington connections. I will do it well.

You shall see I will do it well, as if it were for yourself. This is what your talk at St. Cloud meant. You were trying to prepare me for this. You think that I cannot change. Well, you will see. To be the inspiration of a man's best work—that is the mission of woman, about which we were talking to-day, and you are fulfilling it. I thank you."

CHAPTER XI

STRANGERS AND FRIENDS

IN the reading room, situated on the ground floor of the hotel, and opening from the breakfast room, Joyce Eldridge sat one morning in the sunshine, reading a letter from Mrs. Fenwick.

Joyce was guiltily conscious of her own epistolary shortcomings toward her aunt, and knowing well that lady's views on such subjects, she opened the letter with some trepidation, fearing to find her sins set forth with a force and directness which Mrs. Fenwick did not hesitate to employ toward her niece when she thought it necessary. Affection only quickened the inconvenient clearness of her vision, and faults which might have been pardoned in those to whom she was indifferent were summarily dealt with in the case of anyone whom she loved.

As Joyce's eyes fell upon the opening words, she saw that her fears had not been groundless. The letter was dated "Old Field, September tenth," and began:

"My Dear Joyce:

"It seems four years instead of four months since I have seen your face and heard the sound of your voice. Letters are a poor substitute for personal intercourse, and you have been rather chary of even these. Promptness in letter writing, my dear niece, is a shibboleth of courtesy and should not be neglected. On this side of the water, the telephone has rudely taken the place of writing, and secures the maximum of trouble to the other person with the minimum of inconvenience to one's self, a principle which seems to have found acceptance with your generation. But the horrid clang of the telephone, which summons one as if one were a servant, is better than the ungraciousness of silence. I would rather receive a souvenir card, that lowest depth of infamy in correspondence, than to hear nothing and fancy that you have quite forgotten me. Write me details. Write me whom you are meeting and what they are saying. Do not trouble yourself to describe the scenery. What I wish is to know all about you and your father and Doctor Dilke.

"From what you write of Émilie I judge that she has changed very little since I used to know her as a girl. She was then vain, flippant and selfish, and her marriage tended to develop those qualities. She prided herself on her manner; but she had learned neither deference for the old nor helpfulness to the young. To judge a woman's courtesy you must observe the bearing toward those of a different generation or a different class—people from whom she has nothing to gain except good will.

"Altogether, I confess that Émilie du Pont is not a person whom I covet as a friend for you, and I do not like to see you so strongly attracted to her. I dare say

you think this the result of prejudice. It is not—it is the result of judgment.

“You speak of my belonging to ‘the old school.’ My dear, there *is* no old school. The world is divided now, as it always has been, into two classes, one of which believes in noise and display and self-advertising, the other in a quiet pursuit of one’s own aims and interests, with due regard for the rights of others and an appreciation of the dignity of privacy. One class is prominent, the other influential.

“I should be very sorry to believe that the first was representative of America, though it certainly proclaims itself such, and, as the trumpets on its tallyhos and automobiles give strident notice of its approach, no one can be ignorant of its presence. It is open to us, however, to accept or decline its association as we choose.

“In New York, I confess that it is difficult to escape from its contact. It is bad enough to live in a city which calls itself ‘New’ without having the fitness of the term forced upon one, by the garishness of recent riches and the varnish of freshly acquired equipages. But here on my quiet acres above the Hudson, everything has the old-time serenity of Nature herself.

“Henry calls the place dull. Well, perhaps if the place could speak it would call *him* dull. Henry finds it necessary to his happiness to be constantly occupied no matter how little he accomplishes; to be moving and moving rapidly, no matter in what direction. The automobile exists to meet tastes like his.

“He pities you for these months ‘wasted,’ as he calls them, in Europe. I judge from your letters that you are not greatly in need of his sympathy. Neither do I need yours, expressed so warmly, for my rheumatism. I wrote an account of my symptoms to Doctor Dilke

partly to ask for a prescription and partly to secure an account of you and of your father. His report of both is satisfactory.

"I trust that you appreciate the advantage of companionship with a man like Doctor Dilke, 'a man of parts,' as they used to say. At present he has learned too much from books and too little from life; but that will change. So Émilie du Pont finds him 'unimportant,' does she? And what, pray, are Émilie's standards of importance? But you need not answer. I know them of old. Do not you be guided by them, Joyce.

"Émilie is an amusing companion in her thin, tinkling, little way, but a poor counsellor and a poorer confidante. Take my advice, and trust her only with creditable secrets. She will repeat them and you will reap the advantage.

"Your exchange confidences are not a fair bargain, for you are really frank and she only seems so. You will notice if you review her talk with care, that she has told you nothing which she did not intend beforehand that you should know. Her anecdotes of herself, however refreshingly discreditable in the beginning, always take on a rose-coloured light in the end. Worse than that, I have sometimes had occasion to observe that they were inaccurate, and nothing is so underbred as untruthfulness.

"I do not ask you to be suspicious. I only advise you to be watchful. The Scriptures command us to love our enemies, but not to trust them. I do not go so far as to consider Émilie an enemy, but I do regard her as a dangerous friend."

Joyce paused in her reading, and sat looking down thoughtfully at the toes of her slippers.

"Aunt Sylvia is prejudiced. She is very unfair to Émilie," the girl said to herself. Then, after a moment's reflection, she added, "However, it is as well to be on one's guard."

At this point in her reflections, she looked up and saw Dilke standing by the table, idly turning the pages of the latest *Figaro*.

His eyes met Joyce's glance. He crossed the room and took a chair beside hers.

"You have letters from home?" he asked.

"Yes, one from Aunt Sylvia."

"Does she speak of her rheumatism?"

"Only incidentally, but she speaks of you."

"Indeed! Mrs. Fenwick's comments are so trenchant that I hesitate to ask what she says."

"Oh, she speaks cordially," Joyce replied.

"She always does speak cordially of you; but she says—I wonder if she would object to my telling you what she says——"

"Now you *must* tell me, or I shall imagine the worst."

"It is not so bad—in fact, it is not bad at all. She says that you are 'a man of parts' (isn't that a good old-fashioned phrase!); but that you know less of life than of books."

Dilke raised his eyebrows.

"May I ask in what connection the remark was made?" he queried.

"In comparing you with Émilie," Joyce said

after a moment's hesitation. "Aunt Sylvia does not appreciate Émilie——"

"I am not surprised at that. It is the clash not only of temperaments, but of epochs. Madame du Pont is the essence of the modern spirit against which Mrs. Fenwick is a living protest. Then they have common experiences differently treated, which is always a barrier. They are both widows, but they wear their rue with a difference. Mrs. Fenwick thinks that Madame du Pont has no heart, because she finds so much worth while in life after her husband's death. Madame du Pont considers that Mrs. Fenwick has no philosophy because she finds so little under similar circumstances."

Joyce looked up with a demure smile.

"It rankled, I see——"

"Rankled? What rankled?"

"Aunt Sylvia's remark. You are willing to show by your insight into character that you are not so unskilled in real life as she thinks, and you are not unwilling to have the remark repeated to her as a neat revenge."

Dilke coloured with vexation.

"I have been impertinent and ridiculous," he exclaimed. "I thank you for stopping me."

Joyce's manner changed instantly.

"It is I who have been impertinent," she said. "We have been thrown together so intimately

that I cannot help forgetting sometimes that I am talking to a stranger."

If Joyce intended to punish Dilke for his resentment, she succeeded beyond her wish. He grew suddenly pale, and repeated her last word.

"A stranger? Yes, I suppose I am that. But even strangers may be something to each other. The greatest encouragement which I ever received came to me in my hour of need from a stranger."

Something in Dilke's tone touched his companion. Her look softened and she leaned forward, clasping both hands over her knee.

"And when was that?" she asked.

"It was once, in a crowd, when I was feeling peculiarly forlorn and discouraged. I saw a face—a very beautiful face, but cold and utterly indifferent as it turned toward me. Later it fell in my way to do its owner some trifling service and she thanked me with a smile which changed the colour of life for me, and made me feel that in what seemed an unfriendly world, there might be a latent friendliness ready to be called out if occasion offered. That girl will never know what she did for me——"

"What a pity!" Joyce exclaimed. "It is like the passing of Pippa. How much it would mean to her if she could know!"

"No," Dilke answered, looking down, "I don't think that she would care. The thought of me as an individual probably never crossed her mind. The smile was simply the expression of an habitual graciousness."

"I will think of that girl after this," Joyce said reflectively. "When I am tempted to be sarcastic or uncivil, as I was just now, I will try to cultivate a habit of graciousness; so, you see, your Pippa has done me good too."

Joyce rose as she spoke. "I think," she said, "that I will go to my room and write to my aunt, since we leave to-morrow. The letter must reach home a few days before I do, else my welcome will not be as warm as I could wish."

"Before you go," Dilke questioned, "would you be willing to withdraw that objectionable word 'stranger' which you applied to me a minute ago?"

"Of course I will," Joyce answered. "It was an absurd word to use after all our weeks of intimate acquaintance——"

"'Acquaintance' does not satisfy me either," Dilke rejoined. "Could you not stretch your conscience and your vocabulary to the point of calling me a friend?"

Joyce looked at him with the unselfconscious gravity of a child. "I shall be very glad to have you a friend, if you wish it," she said.

"But I must warn you that my standards of friendship are somewhat exacting."

"I trust you will not find that mine fall below them."

"Perhaps you would find mine exaggerated."

"What are these terrifying demands, may I ask?"

"The chief is candour, a much more far-reaching candour than that for which one looks in an acquaintance. The amount of truth that can be told between two people is the measure of their friendship."

"Let us agree upon that basis then," Dilke responded with a ring of cordial satisfaction in his voice. "And since it will not do to shadow the beginning of our candid friendship with even a trifling deceit, let me make a confession——"

"Go on—I am waiting," Joyce said with a rising flush.

"The story which I told you a while ago—of the stranger, you remember——"

"Yes, don't tell me that she was not real!"

"She was real. She was all that I said. What I omitted to mention was that the stranger was *you*."

Joyce raised her eyes with an expression difficult to translate.

"Since we must be candid," she replied, "let me make *my* confession—I knew it all the time."

CHAPTER XII

HOMeward BOUND

DILKE stood with Joyce Eldridge watching the wake left by the vessel as she steamed out of the harbour of Hamburg. The sky was grey-blue, the water blue also, but of a deeper shade. The shores danced backward with the rise and fall of the vessel as if they had motion and were leaving instead of being left. The band was playing on the deck, and everything combined to give an air of festivity to this departure. But neither Dilke nor Joyce was in holiday humour.

"It is like the letting down of the curtain after the play," Joyce said, "watching Europe fading out of sight like that."

"Yes," Dilke answered; "and the worst of it is that the end of the play means the beginning of work."

"I wish that it did for me. You have no idea how empty a woman's life seems when all this travel and sight-seeing comes to an end and there is nothing to take its place."

"But you have your housekeeping."

"Yes; but I am not needed—not really needed at home. A housekeeper could do it as well and better."

"You are very necessary to your father."

"You really think so!" exclaimed Joyce, brightening visibly.

"Why, yes, anyone can see that. His first question wherever he appears is: 'Where is Joyce?'"

"I am glad to have you tell me that. It gives me more courage for things which are quite hard to bear sometimes."

"I know—I know," Dilke responded with sympathy in his voice. Turning to look at her, he saw tears standing on the dark fringe of her eyelashes.

"Poor little girl!" he said, laying his hand over hers on the railing. "You must let me tell you just this once, my friend, how I have watched you all these months and how I have admired your patience and wisdom and self-control."

"I thank you," Joyce answered, looking up into his eyes, and not trying to withdraw her hand from that friendly protecting clasp. "I thank you more than I can say."

When Dilke lifted his hand it was shaking. Words trembled on his lips, but he choked them back.

"Come, come!" he said, striving to force a smile. "It will not do to begin the journey in this spirit. We must try to make the voyage the jolliest part of the trip."

As he turned away from Joyce, he was conscious that Brandyce was standing at his elbow and touching him lightly on the arm.

"Are these your field glasses?" Brandyce asked.

"No, they are not mine," Dilke answered. "Miss Eldridge, may I present Captain Brandyce, of whom I was speaking to you?"

To himself Dilke was saying: "Confound Brandyce's impudence! Those field glasses are his most cherished possession, but he means to lose no time in meeting Miss Eldridge."

Joyce raised her eyes to Brandyce's face, and then a quick wave of colour spread over her own. "Why!" she exclaimed, "you are Eustace Brandyce. I had no idea that it was you of whom Doctor Dilke was talking."

"Yes," said Brandyce, "I recognised you at once. I wished to know if you remembered *me* after all these years."

"Does a girl ever forget her first party?"

"You mean that fancy-dress party for children at my uncle's a dozen years ago."

Joyce nodded.

"It was my first visit to America," Brandyce

said. "I remember wondering why boys and girls enjoyed themselves so much more there than in England, and wishing that I need never go home."

"I had no idea that you were English. I thought then," Joyce added, with a pretty, flattering intonation, "that I disliked the English."

"Banish that thought at once!" exclaimed Brandyce. "Let me start at least without prejudice in your mind. As for your not discovering that I was English, I am rather proud of that, for even at that early age I determined not to carry my insularity about with me like the brand on a broncho. I wished to be American in America and French in France. One gets more in that way. Don't you think so?"

Dilke stood by, stupefied by finding that this introduction which he had dreaded the necessity of making was taken out of his hands, and liking the situation none the better for that fact. When Brandyce finished speaking, Dilke said: "Since you and Miss Eldridge are old acquaintances, I will leave you for a few moments while I attend to the steamer trunks. They have a trick of getting into the hold if they are not watched." As he turned away he saw that the two returned at once to their talk.

"How it all comes back to me!" Joyce was

saying. "It was one of the mortifying experiences of my life."

"Mortifying?"

"Yes. Your cousin Janet did not want me. She naturally thought that two guests from the same family were enough, and Henry and my cousin Émilie, who was visiting us for a week, were going; but your uncle said: "Joyce shall come if I have to dance with her myself."

"Janet always *was* selfish," said Brandyce.

"Not at all. It was her party, and she did not wish it spoiled by the intrusion of a child of twelve among people of the proper age. 'The proper age' varies with the views of the speaker. To Janet it suggested fifteen or sixteen. The only grudge I bore against Janet was for repeating that humiliating remark of your uncle's to Henry. Henry never had delicate perceptions. He told the family and the family laughed. I did not."

"Henry was a brute," assented Brandyce sympathetically. It was wonderful how his spirits were rising under this recalling of old times. "Did you really object to that speech of my uncle's?"

"Object! If the party had not been 'fancy dress' my pride would have kept me at home. As it was, I hesitated. If a party were over when it was over it would not have been so bad;

but I knew that Henry and Émilie would be talking over this one all through the week, while I should sit by ignorant and ignored."

"Of course you could not do it. It was not to be considered for an instant."

"Thank you. It is a comfort to feel that there was some excuse for my lack of self-respect. 'Fancy dress' proved too alluring to my imagination and I yielded. Émilie was to be a court lady in a satin dress of my mother's with Roman pearls and real lace. Henry was to appear as the Duke of Modena. Just why 'Modena' I never knew; but it seemed to add the finishing touch of aristocracy to his black velvet suit. I had nothing to wear. That was an argument for staying at home. Henry and Émilie made it evident that they wished I would. That was an argument for going—but why am I telling you all this in the midst of bustle? It is most egotistical and inappropriate."

"It's perfectly delightful!" exclaimed Brandyce with emphasis. "Nothing in years has made me feel so young. Let us take these two chairs out of the crowd. Now please continue, and remember everything that you can. Then I will tell you what I remember. It will be like 'The Ring and the Book.'"

"Shall I really tell all that I remember?" Joyce responded. "I believe I will, for I like

talking about the time when I was a little girl. In fact," Joyce admitted candidly, "I am afraid I like talking about myself in general.

"I remember," she continued, "it was decided that I should go as Bo Peep—in my old white dress. Of course it was short; but shepherdesses always showed their feet and ankles, and then I thought the crook wound with blue ribbons enchanting. Henry said that it looked like a barber's pole; but he was in a bad humour. It crowded the carriage and nearly broke the window, but it arrived in safety.

"We came down stairs, all together. Émilie looked beautiful with her red cheeks and auburn hair; but I do think her long gown helped her. At any rate, she was seized upon at once and carried off by a prince in light blue. I stood still and waited—simply waited. That was all—nothing happened. I wished, oh, how I wished that I had never come! But I endured the suspense fairly well, till I saw your uncle bearing down toward me. Then I clutched Henry's arm, though before I left home I had resolved on no account to appeal to him. But this was no time for niceties of behaviour.

"'You will dance this with me, won't you, Henry?' I implored. Henry looked at me with the air of one who had known all along how it would be.

“‘Yes,’ he said, ‘I’ll dance this once; but I don’t want to get stuck with you.’”

“He did not say *that!*”

“Oh, yes. It is the privilege of one’s family to say what other people only *think*. I assured Henry that I should not mind being left alone after the first; but I did. I could not bring myself to let Henry’s arm go. At length in one of our turns we came opposite my crook, which I had left propped against the wall. Here Henry stopped firmly. ‘You’d better sit down,’ he said, as one who has borne enough.

“‘Oh, Henry, are you going to ask another girl?’ I asked. ‘No,’ he answered scornfully. (You know how Henry despised the sex until he began to fall in love.) ‘I don’t like talking to girls. I’m going over to talk to Eustace Brandyce by the door there.’”

Brandyce nodded, smiling at the picture which rose in his mind; but he would not risk interrupting the narrative.

“I asked Henry to bring you over where I was; but he assured me that you wouldn’t like it.

“‘He might,’ I ventured; but Henry crushed me by retorting: ‘It’s his uncle’s house—I guess if he wanted to, he’d come over without an invitation.’ There was no resisting the pitiless logic of this remark, and I clasped my

crook in cold fingers and watched my last hope disappear with Henry."

"What a memory you have!" exclaimed Brandyce, lost in admiration.

"Oh, one remembers well when things are branded in. Émilie was dancing in the court quadrille; but I had no room in my heart for envy. My soul was too full of the sinking sense of failure. All that I asked now was to escape your uncle's gaze. He would dance with me if no one else would! Oh, why had I not stayed at home and improved my mind!

"I crept into a corner behind the curtain and wiped my eyes with the end of the blue bow on my crook; but nobody took any notice, and at last the supper march began and all the Jacks and Jills walked gaily past me. But the worst of all was when your uncle rose up in front of me as big as a house to my startled vision, and with a voice that I was sure could be heard in the supper room called out: 'Hulloa! How's this? Has Bo Peep lost her sheep?'

"When he said that I saw what a fool I had been.

"Of course that crook was an unlucky symbol of sheep lost and not to be recovered in the whole unhappy evening. Before I could think of anything to answer, your uncle beckoned to you. 'Here, Eustace,' he called, 'take this sheepless

young shepherdess into the other room and get her some supper!' Then I looked up and saw you standing there. Now you tell—that is, if you remember."

"I remember perfectly," said Brandyce. "When you came in I thought that you were quite the prettiest girl at the party. I wished to ask you to dance, but you looked so young, I was afraid people would laugh at us. At seventeen it is a terrible thing to be laughed at. I remember we discussed the subject of age at supper and you descanted on the dreadfulness of being young, and I tried to cheer you with assurances that it was a trouble one outgrew; but you said that it did not happen till you were old and had ceased to care.

"Then we talked about schools and the difficulties of Latin, and finally it was arranged that I should walk to school with you next day and carry your books."

"Oh, yes, yes!" exclaimed Joyce gleefully. "I shall never forget the pride with which I told Henry about that. It increased his respect for me so that he told mother when we reached home that I had done very well at the party—toward the end."

Dilke came back from his oversight of the luggage to find them still talking there, apparently forgetful of everyone and everything but

themselves—on those easy terms which childish acquaintance gives in later years. His heart sank as he observed it. He stood at a little distance and studied Brandyce more closely than he had ever yet done—studied him to classify his own impressions and, if possible, to gather some idea of how Joyce Eldridge would be impressed.

Brandyce's face was long and narrow and clean shaven. The strong lines about the ear and jaw showed to their best advantage. His hair had a dash of premature grey which seemed an outward token of experience of the world. His speech with its mellow tone, its full vowels and careful consonants, told unmistakably of his upbringing among men and women who could afford time for the niceties of language, and who were not hurried into mumbled utterance.

His manner conveyed the impression of repose with latent energy. He never wasted effort. When a thing was to be done, he did it with astonishing quickness and immediately was at rest again, impassive as if there would never be a call for future action.

His face gave large scope for interpretation, and offered many interrogations to the observer. Was the slightly receding chin weak or delicate? Was the thin-lipped mouth sensitive or treacherous? Were the narrow grey eyes watchful or

furtive? The answers to these questions varied not only with the individual making of them, but with the varying moods of that individual. Dilke was never twice of the same mind in regard to them. He was by turns repelled and attracted, wavering and baffled. A question put by Joyce led Dilke to draw nearer.

"How could you bear to leave the army?" she was asking. "To me it has always seemed the most fascinating of careers."

Dilke's curiosity was aroused and he waited with some impatience for Brandyce's answer, which, when it came, was non-committal.

"Army life has its fascinations, certainly," he said, "but it has its limitations, too, and very irritating they become after a while. A man is never his own master, you see, which is sometimes very vexatious, and then there is a gypsy strain in my blood which makes wandering more attractive than marching. I could not give up for a lifetime the ability to rove about the world at my own sweet will."

"That I can understand perfectly," Joyce responded. "I often wonder at the dull content with which people settle down to a life in one place, a life of bondage to their belongings."

"Yes," said Brandyce, "I never see a gypsy encampment without a thrill of admiration for a

race which has learned the art of living without possessions."

"Your friends do not seem to have outgrown the taste for acquiring the possessions of others," said Dilke, moving a step nearer Joyce and joining in the talk.

Brandyce laughed. "Oh, for the most part they only pick up stray horses, and you must admit that horses belong by a process of natural selection to nomads rather than to dull tillers of the soil who live in the same smug house generation after generation. A mule is quite enough for their needs."

"Here comes Émilie!" exclaimed Joyce. "I suppose, from her expression, that I have borrowed something of her and forgotten to return it. I am afraid that is the strain of gypsy blood in *my* veins. What is it now, Émilie? By the way, let me introduce Captain Brandyce. My cousin, Madame du Pont. Now I am ready to be tried by court martial. What have I done?"

"Only left the keys of your trunk and mine on the dressing table of your room in the hotel at Hamburg."

Joyce's eyes grew round with horror.

"I did! I did! It is all true," she exclaimed. "You should never have trusted me with them, Émilie."

"You may remember," said her cousin, "that

I objected to lending you my key; but you begged to put a hat in the top tray of my trunk, and called down maledictions on your head if you forgot to return the key."

"The curse has fallen. I am a convicted felon. I can only appeal to the mercy of the court."

"The court pronounces you guilty," said Brandyce, "and deposes Doctor Dilke to serve your sentence by interviewing the ship's carpenter, borrowing a chisel and opening the trunks by force, while you on arriving in New York shall pay a locksmith to repair Madame du Pont's——"

"O wise young judge, O excellent young man!" exclaimed Dilke. "Come, Madame, let us go and investigate first what can be done with my keys."

To himself he said: "I wish that other matters were as easily set right as this."

Dilke returned in a short time; but when he joined the group Brandyce turned away, and lighting a cigar, went forward, where he stood alone gazing out to sea and watching the vessels as they passed into port.

The meeting with Joyce Eldridge had recalled vividly to Brandyce the days of his youth when life seemed full of infinite possibilities which had now narrowed to few and doubtful lines.

He was much addicted to self-accusations in the intervals of giving occasion for them; but he had reached the dangerous stage where he could dwell upon the mistakes of the past without gathering from them the bitter tonic which gives cogency and compelling force to resolutions for the future.

There were certain passages in his life which he kept under lock and key, and would no more voluntarily draw out for contemplation than he would choose a skeleton as a dinner guest. His self-reproaches were always vague and tempered with a feeling that he had been the sport of circumstances, and that fate had dealt hardly with a well-meaning fellow.

To-day, as he reviewed events, he told himself that all his misfortunes dated from his going into the army; that that had played the mischief with his life. The career was not fitted for him, but he had chosen it to please his mother. It had been a sacrifice.

Had it really been the sacrifice he thought it? Who shall say? Do we not all look back to some renunciation as the cause of our falling short of the mark, and comfort ourselves with the thought that all that followed, even if it culminated in sin, was but the crabbed fruit on the tree of virtue?

These few moments of talk with Joyce had

left him dissatisfied. Why had this girl come suddenly into the field of his vision, to give him a glimpse of heights which he might have gained, to recall his old ambitions?

Meanwhile, in the stateroom below the deck where Brandyce was standing, Madame du Pont lay stretched out in her berth taking the afternoon rest without which she held that no woman could do credit to herself on sea or land. Her slippered foot protruded from one of those French confections of lace and silk which in their elaboration suggest that the wearer must be either a singularly fragile well person or a singularly healthy invalid.

Joyce Eldridge, propped by pillows, sat on the sofa opposite with hands clasped behind her head. The ship was pitching now and the waves slapped the porthole, leaving it wet and streaming.

"What do you think of this Captain Brandyce?" Madame du Pont asked.

"I have not had time enough to think anything yet."

"The thoughts which you take time to have are of no account. It is first estimates which are trustworthy. Then the photographic plates of the mind are fresh and not blurred by a composite impression."

"But you see in a way my impression of

Captain Brandyce was composite. I had met him before."

"I thought that when you were in Paris you were eager to meet him as a new experience."

"I was; but when I did meet him I found that I had known him as a boy when he was visiting in New York."

"Did you like him in those days?"

"Immensely! But I don't know whether that is to be set down to the credit of his charm or of my inexperience. You see, to a very young girl, a boy has a glorious individuality. He is not yet merged into a type. In fact, I think he really has more personality than ten years later."

Madame du Pont played with her rings, and regarded her slender fingers and almond-shaped nails in silence for several minutes. Then she said:

"Captain Brandyce seemed to me to have a great deal of personality, a peculiarly responsive one at that. He lends himself to the conversation."

"Lends himself? Yes, but at a good rate of interest. There is something in his eyes that suggests many things unsaid. One wonders what they are."

"You observed him closely."

"One naturally does in meeting an old acquaintance newly."

"Joyce, you analyse too much. You give yourself room for no natural emotions."

The girl opposite raised herself from her pillow and pushed back the hair from her forehead. "Émilie!" she exclaimed with more energy than the occasion seemed to warrant, "do you know what it is to live in the top of your mind because you do not dare to dive down deep, because you are afraid of what you might find there?"

Madame du Pont looked at her with astonishment. This phase of Joyce Eldridge's character was so new to her that she could not conceal the surprise which showed itself in her face. Joyce detected it and instantly withdrew behind her customary guard of triviality. "Yes," she went on, "I sometimes feel as I do at home when I know that the cellar needs cleaning, and rather than investigate I go out and buy a new piece of bric-à-brac for the drawing room. I hope, by the way, Émilie, that when we are in New York you will help me to rearrange our rooms. They are so stiff, so barren, compared with yours. You have a genius for conversational arrangement of furniture. No wonder that you have successful evenings! The chairs seem to talk of themselves. I can fancy them holding a salon after you have gone to bed."

Joyce did not stop till she had led the con-

versation to an entirely safe distance from the original subject. She was conscious of one of her sudden delicate antagonisms. She felt that she had in a way cheapened herself by revealing a real feeling to a highly artificial listener. Émilie du Pont understood some things. She knew how a room should be furnished, she knew how a woman should dress, she knew how a man could be made comfortable; but to have expected of her the comprehension of a genuine emotion was a stupidity for which Joyce blushed, and in the reaction of anger against herself and her companion, she plunged again into the subject which she had been at such pains to end, and asked abruptly:

“Émilie, did you ever feel anything?”

“Feel anything? Heat or cold or hunger, for example?”

“No, I mean feel anything in your heart.”

“In my youth I felt quite too much. I found it inconvenient. I learned that cultivating sensitiveness was cultivating points of attack. I discovered the superior advantages of emotions which remain under control, the more subtle forms of grief which have a perfume of melancholy, the secondary pleasures which like secondary colours are more satisfying, more lasting than the primary ones.”

Joyce raised her eyebrows. “That is the

fault which I find in you. You play at life as Marie Antoinette played at farming in the Trianon gardens. You make real people seem bucolic, real feeling a clumsiness."

Madame du Pont only smiled and answered lightly:

"Calomniez! Calomniez! Il en reste toujours quelquechose."

"It is not a calumny. It is the truth."

"Ah! That is spoken like your friend Doctor Dilke. He identifies himself with the cause of truth till he cannot tell which is which."

"There it is!" Joyce exclaimed with rising temper. "You do not like him because he is real. He does not 'lend himself to conversation,' as you say. He assumes that you have a firm conviction or a genuine desire for enlightenment when you make a statement or ask a question."

"What a droll point of view! I should take my convictions to a debating society, my ignorance to a dictionary or an encyclopedia. When I seek a man's society it is to get at his personality."

"Or to impress him with yours."

"Quite the same thing in the end, my dear. Mutual impressions are the *raison d'être* of society. Now I will tell you something. If Doctor Dilke could rid himself of his super-

fluous reality, I should begin to take a distinct interest in him."

"And I should lose mine."

"You have one, then."

"I take an interest in everyone whom I meet," Joyce answered, conscious that keen eyes were fixed upon her. "The world is full of delightful problems in human form, personalities which attract and repel by turns."

"Your interest, then, is purely psychological. You feel no tremors, no thrills?"

What Joyce's answer might have been is purely conjectural, for at this moment Madame du Pont's maid knocked at the door, asking what robe madame would wish laid out for dinner, and Joyce went to find her father and inquire what arrangements he had made for seats at table.

CHAPTER XIII

A GAME OF CHESS

THE steamer which Mr. Eldridge had selected was a slow one. The screws seemed to turn with a quiet tenacity of purpose, keeping steadily at their task, but with no undue haste in achieving their ultimate goal.

The days came and went monotonously, unmarked save by the sounding of the fog-horn, the betting on the log, the sighting of other vessels and the endless game of human nature which goes on by land and sea, but perhaps most intensely by sea.

One evening Dilke saw Joyce walking the deck alone, her face white and her brows knit.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing, nothing at all," but her lips quivered. She held to her self-control with an effort, but it was obvious that she was suffering physical pain. As she answered, Dilke caught a glimpse of her bandaged finger.

"What is this?" he asked, still more imperatively; "I insist upon knowing."

"I remember of old that when you insist upon

knowing you will know, so I may as well tell the whole story and furnish another instance of my contumacy."

Joyce tried to smile, but the result was rather pitiful.

"Go on," Dilke commanded, his lip caught between his teeth.

"I had opened my porthole in defiance of the steward's orders. I had endured the air of that cabin till I was perishing for lack of breath, so I opened the porthole, and a wave came in as the steward had said it would. I tried to close the window hastily and my finger was crushed, as it deserved to be. That is all."

"All! Quite enough, I should say. And why did you not come to me at once instead of binding it yourself and doing, perhaps, no end of harm?"

"I did not bind it myself; I went to the ship's doctor."

"The dickens you did! The ship's doctor is a good fellow. May I ask, however, why you preferred his services to mine?"

"Oh!" said Joyce, avoiding the dark glance bent upon her and fixing her eyes on the lifeboat ahead. "Don't you remember how we agreed there on Lake Geneva that you were Papa's physician and not mine, and that if my health ever suffered from my

carelessness, I should consult a doctor of my own?"

"I remember nothing of the kind, and neither do you," Dilke answered with scant civility; "but this is no time for quibbles or recriminations. I must see that finger. Is Madame du Pont in her cabin?"

"I believe so. She left the deck some time ago."

"Let us go down there, and I will join you when I have found my bag with its dressings and antiseptics."

"Very well," Joyce answered, turning toward the companionway. "But probably when you look at my finger, you will find the matter of small consequence and wonder why I made such a bother about it."

"I hope so," Dilke replied, shortly, as he turned in the direction of his room.

A few moments later he was unwinding the bandages about the finger and swearing inwardly because he could not prevent his own hands from trembling. Joyce too was trembling and her face was pale. When Dilke spoke, however, his tone was cool and professional.

"An ugly bruise," he said; "a little more and you would have lost the top of your finger. As it is, I think we shall be able to save even the nail; but it must be looked to each day, and

this is not the proper dressing at all, though I ought not to say it of another man's work."

"And what shall *I* say to the other doctor?" queried Joyce with sudden embarrassment. "He told me to let him see it to-morrow."

"Tell him that the dressings came off and I replaced them. Tell him whatever you choose. But I shall speak to him myself, and I do not think that he will ask."

Madame du Pont looked up with something like admiration in her eyes.

"You play the surgeon as masterfully as you play at chess," she said.

"Both are games, Madame. Quickness and decision are the main points."

As he spoke he finished the treatment, swiftly reapplied the bandages and without another word turned and left the stateroom.

For a long time after binding the finger Dilke wandered up and down the deck in sullen misery, thinking of Joyce and of Brandyce and of his own duty to each. Turn where he would he could see no opening. In vain he asked himself what the ideal man would do in his place. Perhaps he was too far from the ideal himself to grasp in imagination the course that such a man would follow.

He might go to Brandyce and say: "Will you tell the truth about yourself to Joyce Eldridge,

or shall I do it for you? I admit all the obligation under which I lie, all the seeming falseness in betraying one to whom I owe so much; but the truth must be told."

Then he fancied Brandyce turning smiling, sarcastic eyes upon him and saying: "My dear Judas, exactly what is the truth to which you refer?"

He knew that he should be dumb and abashed before that question, to which he had no answer.

He might talk with Mr. Eldridge and put him on his guard by a judicious hint or two; but hinting was not in Dilke's line. That form of attack is the art of meaner men. Moreover, Mr. Eldridge required heavy-handed measures to make him see a situation, and the situation once seen, he would never end till he had probed it to the bottom, turned on the searchlight of investigation baldly with neither tact nor mercy, and at the end there might be only himself pilloried as a traitor to his friend.

Then his thoughts turned to Joyce—turned to her? Did they ever turn away? Did they not cling to her as a man clings to a live wire which he cannot let drop though the death agony convulses every muscle?

If he spoke to Joyce herself he had no obtuseness to fear. Her intelligence would dart like

a hound upon the scent, if he threw out the faintest suggestion of his suspicions. But she too would demand proofs, where he had none to give, and he felt that he could not meet the scorching scorn of her glance, if she detected in some quiver of his tone, some unguarded word, some trembling of the fingers, that he too loved her.

His fancy pictured her with her head turned a little to one side as she often sat, and the delicate mockery of her mouth as she would ask:

"And is it wholly disinterested, this betrayal of the man who saved your life, or do you throw out these dark hints because you fear that he is winning the prize for which you would give your life?"

Of course he knew that those would not be her words; but such would be the purport of her speech, and he told himself that there would be truth in it. He was *not* disinterested. He knew it, and hard as he tried to hold the balance of justice even, he could not tell how far he was influenced against Brandyce by the very fact of Joyce's preference of him. His own dislike had grown day by day, and yet with no more cause than it had in the beginning. Surely that was a sign of hallucination such as he should recognise in any man who came to consult him as a patient.

At last he decided that silence and inaction, the hardest achievements for a man of strong will and eager activity, must be his course. But oh, the bitterness of it all!

The next few days were a period of the deepest heart-searching that Dilke had ever known. Hitherto he had always supposed that for an honest man the path of life must be tolerably clear. He might find it difficult to do right; but he must always be able to see clearly what was the right if he had strength to do it. Now he found with surprise that there were many faces to duty, and many questions involved as to the person to whom one owed the highest duty.

From the moment of Brandyce's meeting with Joyce Eldridge he had devoted himself to her, at first with the easy "God-bless-the-ladies" air which marks the manner of the military man the world over, and which therefore gave Dilke no uneasiness. But as the days went on—those long shipboard days which count for weeks and months in the opportunities which they offer of intimate acquaintance—his attentions took on a far more serious and personal character. This new interest seemed to brush aside the characteristics of cynical trifling, to reveal the man of action and the man of race.

Dilke found himself speculating as to whether he had ever known the real Brandyce. He

could not wonder that Joyce was so evidently attracted, interested and absorbed.

For himself he saw only one course open, and that was withdrawal. He was glad that Madame du Pont was on board, since her companionship gave him so good an excuse for avoiding all talk with Joyce. He did not count as talk the conversation which goes on among a group of people when remarks are tossed about like confetti at a Roman carnival; the syndicate conversations without reality or substance, with their struggle after epigram, which is another name for the clever statement of an untruth. The talk which he resolved to avoid at all cost was the one-to-one exchange of sincere opinions and personal feelings, hot argument and free guesses at truth, which had grown to be natural to him in those five months with Joyce Eldridge. He missed it as one misses food and drink; but he refused it to himself, as a man resolved to starve pushes away the plate of bread.

It seemed to him that a malign fate had ruled all his acquaintance with Brandyce, implanting that instinctive prejudice which made it hateful to him to receive his life at the man's hands, then forcing unwilling admiration for his fine qualities, and finally calling upon him to meet the debt which he had incurred by laying the better part of himself upon the altar and

watching it consume, giving up all that made life worth living, in favour of the man who had saved his bodily life. With his heart's blood if necessary, he had sworn to Brandyce to repay his obligation, and with his heart's blood he was paying now. But the sacrifices which we are called upon to make are rarely those which we have planned or imagined beforehand.

To the present sacrifice he could have nerved himself if he had felt sure—perfectly sure—that Joyce would be happy if she married Brandyce; but always there was this haunting doubt, this hesitation, this questioning whether he were not sacrificing both himself and her to a quixotic scrupulosity.

He studied the situation closely. He watched Brandyce and he watched Joyce. It seemed to him that he could see them drawing toward each other day by day, and yet he detected, or thought he detected, in Joyce a shadow of the same hesitancy which had disturbed himself in his estimate of Brandyce. As this shadow grew apparently less, Dilke made up his mind that Joyce had either wholly dismissed it or had made up her mind that the qualities which gave her pause were such as she could easily change if she married him.

Nothing is more pathetic to the onlooker than the nonchalance with which girls talk of alter-

ing what is fundamental in a man's character, things to which the Ethiopian's skin and the leopard's spots are superficial trifles.

Dilke looked on all this with a growing sense of exasperation at her willingness to trust her feelings instead of pursuing her doubts, and proving or disproving them thoroughly. Men prefer that women in a general way should be guided by emotion rather than by reason; but in the particular case in hand they find the emotional guidance exceedingly irritating.

Dilke had other causes of depression beside the pangs of misprized love. He was bound for his native land, yet as he drew near home he experienced none of the elation proper to the occasion. Instead, he felt that each revolution of the screw brought him nearer to certain inevitable and embarrassing practical problems.

His income had been of a size to narrow his activities without enlarging his opportunities, and in his pursuit of enlarged opportunities he had had recourse to the simple expedient of eking out income with capital, drawing upon the future with the confidence which youth invariably entertains in that shadowy bank. There is a day of reckoning for such experiments, and Dilke's had come.

When Mr. Eldridge urged this European expedition he had promised Dilke that he should

not suffer financially, and had assured him that he would make it his business to help him build up a permanent practice; but now Dilke experienced a distinct revolt against dependence upon his patron, and resolved to make Herculean efforts to put himself on an independent footing.

That was very well as a consideration for the future, but the pressing problem was the occupation of the present. Dilke recalled grimly the saying of Marcus Aurelius, and wondered if even on a steamer life might be led well; but he swiftly decided that it could not. All he could hope to do was to kill time or at least to administer an anodyne that it might sleep through the next week.

Looking up, while this reflection was passing through his mind, he saw Madame du Pont, and crossing the deck, he joined her.

"You do not feel any anxiety about Joyce's finger?" she asked, as they began to pace the deck slowly.

"Oh, no. The trouble has been taken in time, and threatens nothing worse than a few days of discomfort."

"It was like Joyce to hurt it in that way. She is always doing something headlong, and it generally results disastrously."

Dilke made no answer. He did not find it

easy to discuss Joyce with anyone, least of all with the woman beside him.

"Your friend Captain Brandyce is a fascinating man," said Madame du Pont, breaking the silence abruptly.

"Most people find him so," Dilke answered.

"Yes, there is something about him—a something which only travel and a wide acquaintance with the world can give."

"That is very true."

Madame du Pont darted a quick glance at Dilke. As not infrequently happened, a dim suspicion haunted her that he was amusing himself at her expense; but his face was imperturbable.

"Of course," she went on, "a roving life such as Captain Brandyce has led has its disadvantages; it begets a certain disregard of standards. A man must have connections at home to hold him; but I should judge that he had connections. Such breeding as his bespeaks early training. What is it the Jesuits say: that if they can have a child until he is seven years old, anyone may take him afterward?"

"Something like that, I believe."

"But to return to Captain Brandyce."

"I knew that she would return," said Dilke to himself.

"He was in the service, I think Joyce said——"

"Yes, he was in the service."

"He has left it, then? What is he doing now?"

"At present I believe he is travelling as correspondent for a London paper."

Madame du Pont paused and lifted her lorgnon to inspect a passing steamer.

"His position, then—his financial position is—is somewhat precarious."

There was neither curiosity nor anxiety in Madame du Pont's tone. The thing was admirably well done; but Dilke read it in the light of his experience of the lady's character, and perceived at once the direction in which her inquiries were drifting.

"I know nothing of Captain Brandyce's financial circumstances," he answered, goaded into some irritation. "I seem constantly forced to explain that he is only a chance acquaintance to whom I happen to be under a great obligation."

"Yes, I have heard about that—a gallant rescue—a most romantic episode. But no doubt you are somewhat informed as to his social standing. Englishmen are so different from Americans there. They are classed once for all, and it is easy to know all about them. Captain Brandyce carries aristocracy in his bearing. My instincts deceive me if he has not good blood in his veins."

"Your instincts seldom deceive you, Madame."

"Then he *has* good blood."

"He has an uncle in the Cabinet, and, I believe, a reversionary interest in a title——"

"Ah!" exclaimed Madame du Pont, clapping her white hands softly. "I am so glad; it would have been a terrible blow to me to be compelled to relinquish my confidence in my instincts. You see they are all that we women have to guide us."

"They seem to guide in eminently safe directions," Dilke answered. They had paused in their walk, and he leaned against the side of the cabin regarding Madame du Pont curiously. She had all the technique of charm, pretty gestures of hand and wrist, a slow, graceful turn of the head, a captivating trick of arching eyebrows. Where she failed to charm it was only because she failed to convince, and Dilke had looked on at her little play from the wings, where it was much less effective than from before the footlights.

A moment's silence fell between them.

"Do you play chess?" was Madame du Pont's next question.

"In amateur fashion," Dilke responded without enthusiasm.

"I challenge you to a tournament," Madame du Pont went on "I am a fair player myself."

"Which being translated," said Dilke to himself, "signifies that she intends to leave the field to Brandyce and put me out of harm's way."

"I accept the challenge," said Dilke, and if his eyes conveyed more meaning than his words, Madame du Pont gave no sign. Instead, she said, "If you will go down to the cabin my maid will give you my board. It would be pleasanter, don't you think, to play here on deck?"

"By all means," Dilke answered. "Shall we sit over there where Miss Eldridge and Brandyce appear to have found a comfortable corner?" As he spoke, he glanced toward a laughing group of which Joyce and Brandyce were the centre.

From the time of his coming on board, Brandyce had been the idol of all the children. He drew them to him as if he had been a piper. They were enchanted by the grave courtesy with which he treated them, as if he and they were contemporaries and equals, and then he told such delightful stories of African deserts and Australian gold mines! But his most entrancing accomplishment was the cutting of paper figures—elephants under palm trees, endless lines of camels with shawled ladies on **their** backs, and still more thrilling, **crocodiles**

with the agonised legs of little boys disappearing through their rapacious jaws. No wonder that mothers were compelled to beg him to be less entertaining, or at least less exciting, as bedtime drew near! No wonder that the children clamoured for his favour, and clambered over him, and fought as now for precarious and uncomfortable seats on the slippery arms of his steamer chair, while all the time Joyce looked on and followed his every motion with smiling attention.

Madame du Pont followed Dilke's glance, hesitated, as if considering judicially his proposition to join the group; but after an instant's graceful indecision remarked that the sun would soon be too bright there, and that they would be more comfortable on the other side.

Again Dilke bowed, again he smiled. He was at no pains to disguise from this fair diplomatist that he understood her tactics. For his own part, he decided to offer no objections. On the whole, her scheme fell in well enough with his own plans. But he determined that he would make reprisals.

"Did you ever see Newbold's picture of the chess players?" he asked, as they sat down with the board between them.

"No. Was it good?"

"Excellent. He paints well. That is, I think so—and you?"

"Decidedly. I have been so loud in his praises that I have persuaded a friend of mine, a Senator in Washington, to give Mr. Newbold the work of decorating the hall in his new house."

Dilke pondered on this speech, and on how much or how little it might mean.

"Do you prefer to play with the blacks or the whites?" he asked.

"The blacks, if you don't care."

"It is all one to me. I shall need only a good reason for being defeated. As for Newbold, I am very glad to hear of this opportunity for him—very glad indeed—all he needs is to be known."

"He never will be."

"Why not?"

"He does not care enough about it. He has no initiative."

"Perhaps," insinuated Dilke, "if he married an ambitious wife she might supply the lack."

Madame du Pont shot one glance across the board. "And Newbold says her eyes are neither hard nor bright," Dilke thought to himself, and wondered if *he* could be so deceived.

"Do men confide in each other as women do?" asked Madame du Pont.

"I do not know your sex well enough to answer that. I should say that confidences were rare among men, especially on sentimental subjects; but men observe each other and draw their conclusions."

"Then," said Madame du Pont, "let us discuss Mr. Newbold as a generality."

"By all means! That is a form of vivisection which serves the interest of science without permanently injuring the victim; but I feel bound to point out that if you leave your bishop on that square I shall take it with my knight."

"How honourable of you! I shall avail myself of your generosity and withdraw the bishop."

"To return to Newbold," Dilke began tentatively.

"Yes, in that connection I was about to say that at my age——"

"How can you use that phrase, Madame? It is only dull people who think in terms of age."

"With my experience of life, then——"

"That is better."

"I feel more and more that the most unhappy of marriages is that between an ambitious woman and an unambitious man. It is like wedding a gadfly to a sheep. The sheep is in a state of chronic annoyance and the gadfly

is constantly exasperated that she cannot make her sting pierce the wool."

Dilke smiled. He studied the board for some time, moved a pawn and asked: "Is there any happy marriage for a gadfly?"

"Certainly—with another gadfly."

Madame du Pont's hand hovered over her king. Finally with decision she castled, and then said suddenly:

"I seldom make confidences; but I am strongly inclined to make one to you."

"I shall be highly flattered."

"A Senator in Washington has done me the honour to ask me to marry him, and I am considering the proposal very seriously."

"The position would suit you admirably."

"I think so myself. I should enjoy the sense of power, of advancement. Mr. Newbold could not understand that. He always seems to me like a man who is looking at the view while an army is marching by."

"Marching where?"

"Toward success, arriving at some goal."

"That interests me. I am so doubtful sometimes whether there is any goal at which to arrive—whether we might not all of us as well sit down and look at the view as to go marching and countermarching and perhaps coming back to the old spot in the end."

"I would not dispense with ambition for any enjoyment to be had in views or anything else."

"No, you are an ambitious woman. I have seen that from the beginning of our acquaintance."

"Yes, I am ambitious—I admit it frankly."

Dilke saw that, as in most things which people admit frankly about themselves, the quality struck Madame du Pont as distinctly interesting. Before he could speak she continued:

"And you are an ambitious man."

"I may be; but I do not make a boast of it, as you do. I acknowledge it regretfully as a defect. Ambition is a very youthful quality."

"Perhaps that is why I am proud of it and you ashamed."

"Why on earth did you make that move?" said Mr. Eldridge, who had come up and was leaning on the back of Dilke's chair. "You have exposed your queen."

"Which ambition leads me to capture unscrupulously," said Madame du Pont, sweeping down six squares with her bishop.

"'By that sin fell the angels,'" Dilke responded. "The sacrifice of my queen enables me to say checkmate with my castle."

"It is your game, and well played," said Madame du Pont, who knew how to lose as well

as how to win. "I congratulate—no, I felicitate you. But I will have my revenge to-morrow."

"A mere accident," said Dilke, folding the board. "Your attention was distracted from the game by conversation. To-morrow we will play in silence."

A sailor came up to them at this moment and announced that he had been sent by the captain to ask if Madame du Pont would like to come up on the bridge and look through his glass at a whale which was spouting in the distance.

Madame du Pont would be delighted.

Dilke watched her as she walked away.

"There is a woman," he said to himself, "who knows exactly what she wants and knows how to go to work to attain it. Heaven help the man who looks to her for love or sympathy; but for executive force I have never met her equal. Poor Newbold! After all, he is well out of the entanglement. He is in love with an ideal, and it is better for him to lose all at once than to face a process of gradual disenchantment day by day. I wish that I knew of what Joyce Eldridge and Brandyce are talking."

As if in answer to his question, the two people in his thoughts strolled by. As they passed he caught Brandyce's voice saying: "I can

understand the glamour which unfamiliarity casts over the vagrant life to you, Miss Eldridge; but you have no idea what it means to a man not to know the meaning of home, nor how he envies those who have it."

Dilke looked up from a magazine which he was reading.

"Ask Brandyce to repeat to you a remark which he recently made to me about the Prodigal Son," he said.

The two paused before his chair, and Dilke rose.

"Doctor Dilke flatters me by remembering some foolishness which I uttered six weeks ago. Whatever it was, it has wholly slipped my mind," said Brandyce.

"Then how do you know that it was made six weeks ago?" Dilke inquired.

Brandyce tossed back his head and laughed a boyish laugh. "You have mistaken your vocation, Dilke," he exclaimed; "you should have been a barrister. It did not occur to me that I was subject to cross-examination. How do you get on with him, Miss Eldridge?"

"By always admitting that he is right. I find it easiest in the end."

"Pre-cisely!" ejaculated Brandyce. "That bears out an old theory of mine that physicians and clergymen deteriorate from the professional necessity of dealing with women more than with

men. They grow accustomed to the attitude of deference and miss the invaluable discipline of contradiction to which the rest of us are forced to submit in the rough-and-tumble skirmish of life. Contradiction is a mordant which bites into our self-esteem like aquafortis and does us good."

Dilke ignored the challenge in Brandyce's words. He felt that if he took up the gauntlet and entered the lists of discussion, he should be carried away to say more than he wished, and he preferred to remain neutral.

Turning to Joyce, he said, as if Brandyce's remark had not intervened:

"I never observed this yieldingness of which you speak."

"No?" Joyce queried, smiling. "Then you are less observant than I have given you credit for being."

"On the contrary, I am extremely observant, quite too much so for my own best interests."

Dilke attempted to speak lightly; but when there is a deep undercurrent of emotion it will often find its way into the voice, quite without the intention, even against the will of the speaker. Both Brandyce and Joyce felt the slight embarrassment which is caused by an unexpected note of seriousness in a surface conversation.

Brandyce made a movement to walk on. It was his habit in life always to turn his back upon awkward situations; but Joyce, with the courtesy which was a matter of intuition with her, turned to Dilke, saying: "Will you not join our walk? You are always preaching exercise to me, and yet you take so little yourself that your advice will soon fall into the neglect which follows preaching without practice."

Dilke felt grateful. He realised the tact which had dealt delicately with a possible awkwardness; but he could not meet it half way. His heart was too sore, his nerves still too unstrung.

"No, thank you," he said; "I promised to restore Madame du Pont's chess board to the safe keeping of her maid."

With these words Dilke turned and went down to his cabin, from which he did not reappear. He shut himself up in solitude to brood over the bitterness of "misprized love." If the thought of Joyce had been a compelling factor in his life before, it had now become an overwhelming passion. To think of her with Brandyce was torture.

Love is the prototype of the music which Münchhausen found frozen in the postboy's horn waiting for midsummer to release it. Jealousy is midsummer.

CHAPTER XIV

MEN AND WOMEN

Joyce and Brandyce were sitting beside the skylight of the cabin. Amateur music was going on within. A young man with a large and sonorous voice was assuring his hearers that if doughty deeds his lady pleased, right soon he would mount his steed, though exactly how he was to execute his plan in midocean might have puzzled his audience if they had been less intent on tone production and more absorbed in the meaning of the song.

"Do you sing?" Brandyce asked in answer to Joyce's amused smile."

"I? Oh, no. I have no accomplishments."

"You have achievements, then. All young American women have either achievements or accomplishments."

"I have neither," Joyce answered. "You see, I have no perseverance. If I begin a piece of embroidery the final result is a rusty needle and a skein of tangled silk. I never finish anything."

"You have finished one thing," Brandyce observed.

Joyce hesitated for the fraction of a second, and in that space of time decided that it would be less marked to speak than to be silent.

"If I have finished anything, I trust it is something worth while," she said.

"It is changing a man's life," Brandyce answered, and then to relieve the tension of the situation, he added: "There is Dilke dancing attendance upon Madame du Pont as usual. It amuses me to see him so completely captured. He has always been so loftily superior to sentiment."

"Yes?" was all Joyce said; but her eyes followed Brandyce's glance to the companion-way where Dilke and Madame du Pont were standing.

"I think," Brandyce went on, "that if I were a woman I should fall in love with Dilke."

"What is it that attracts you so in him?" Joyce inquired indifferently.

"Perhaps it is the attraction of opposites. He has the qualities which I lack and which I most admire. Curiously enough, however, the attraction is not mutual. He is far from admiring me."

"He has spoken to me of you with admiration. He told us the story of your saving his life."

"Ah, he made too much of that. A happy

accident, nothing more. It is not his gratitude that I want, but his good opinion, and I shall never have it, and yet there is only one thing in the world that I should value more. Probably I shall not get that either. Fate has played me shabby tricks in every crisis of my life."

"But surely," Joyce interrupted hastily, the colour rising in her cheeks, "gratitude alone will insure you Doctor Dilke's good opinion."

"You think so?" Brandyce rejoined, with smiling scepticism in his glance. "That shows how little you know of the world. Gratitude, my dear Miss Eldridge, is a repelling and not an attracting force."

Joyce shook her head. "Men are not so mean as that," she exclaimed. "I refuse to believe in such a cynical view."

"And a woman? She might be supposed to feel gratitude when a man lays his love at her feet. But does that fact make her like him?"

Brandyce paused and looked keenly at Joyce from his narrow grey eyes.

"The case is quite different," the girl answered. "What he proposes is not a gift but a bargain. He asks for as much as he offers."

Brandyce smiled. He found an unexpected piquancy in the mingled frankness and withdrawal of Joyce's manner. "Well, at least," he said, "I shall wish Dilke good luck in his

woosing." And again Brandyce's glance turned toward the companionway.

Madame du Pont and Dilke had come up from luncheon together. The ship was bounding along under a blue sky, leaving a black trail of smoke to eastward. As they reached the deck, and at the moment when Joyce and Brandyce were observing them, Madame du Pont paused, playing with a heavy chain to which were suspended a gold purse and a lorgnon.

"Will you play chess again this afternoon?" Dilke asked.

Madame du Pont smiled and shook her head.

"Not with you," she answered. "You deceived me basely. You affected in the beginning not to play well in order to increase your triumph in the end. I decline to be humiliated further."

"But we must do something. Life on ship-board does not afford a vast variety of entertainment."

Madame du Pont hesitated, her head a little bent. Then she suggested:

"You might read aloud to me."

"I shall be most happy to be permitted," Dilke responded.

"You are more than permitted, you are urged," rejoined Madame du Pont with just enough exaggeration to suggest that it was a

matter of no moment whatever. In the world a woman may only express interest when she does not feel it. Madame du Pont's manner was constantly marked by such nice adjustments.

"And what shall the book be?" Dilke asked.

"What are those two books protruding from your pockets and making you look like a book agent?"

"This," said Dilke, drawing out a grey volume with a white label, "is Browning's poems. The other small red book is 'Pilgrim's Progress.' Which will you have?"

"'Pilgrim's Progress'!" exclaimed Madame du Pont, with a little gasp of mingled terror and astonishment. "Why in the world do you carry that about with you? Are you religious?"

"No, Madame," Dilke answered. "That is why I enjoy the work of a man who was. But there is another reason for my interest in Bunyan's story. It tells about a fellow who carried a burden on his shoulders. I sympathise with him."

"For my part," said Madame du Pont, "I read to be entertained, not to be instructed, and I prefer to hear about people nearer me, people whom I can understand. Read me something from Browning, though I confess that I should prefer a novel."

Dilke bowed and returned the little red, worn volume to his pocket. "I am very well suited," he said; "I like Browning. I like his medical poems. His doctors use their terms right."

"Let it be Browning, then."

Dilke moved the chairs to the stern of the ship beyond the promenaders. He spread Madame du Pont's rug over her feet and arranged the cushions for her head. That lady was an adept in the art of accepting graciously the services of man, which Dilke had declared to be woman's mission.

"Have you any preference?" he asked, as he took the volume from his pocket and turned the pages idly.

"I prefer that you should choose."

The truth was that Madame du Pont's recollections of Browning were rather vague, and she did not care to show her ignorance.

"We will try 'Andrea del Sarto,' then. Do you know it?"

"Not so well but that I should enjoy hearing it again."

Dilke turned the leaves till he found the poem which he sought, and began reading:

"But do not let us quarrel any more,
No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once;
Sit down and all shall happen as you wish—
You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?"

Dilke had a fine voice and enjoyed using it. Moreover, as he read, a certain dramatic instinct took possession of him. He fancied himself not the Florentine painter addressing his faithless wife, but Newbold talking to the woman before him. So would Newbold have pleaded for his art, so have striven to make her comprehend his aims, the best that was in him, and so would he have failed.

When Dilke reached the saddest line in the poem:

"You at the point of your first pride in me
(That's gone, you know),"

he looked up, half expecting that Madame du Pont would show some sign of consciousness; but she was looking down and smoothing the cuffs of embroidered muslin on her black sleeves.

"Ah!" thought Dilke, "that is an added bit of realism. So Lucrezia would have occupied herself with some detail of finery when a man was breaking his heart for her and trying in vain to wring from her some sign of sympathy."

He did not look up after this, but read on more quietly, though still to him it was Newbold telling the story of failure to reach the highest things, because he had stooped to work for gain instead of glory, and all to please the wife who could not comprehend, could not appreciate, could not even be true.

At last he reached the final words:

"Again the cousin's whistle. Go, my sweet!"

"Well, what do you think of her?" he asked, closing the book and turning to Madame du Pont with a question in his eyes.

"My sympathies are very much aroused."

"Yes, everyone must feel for him."

"For him? Not at all—for her."

Dilke looked up with distinct and surprised interest.

"Why, please?"

"Because she has had no chance to lay her side of the story before the world, and in the opposition stands a great artist backed by a great poet. The odds are not fair. I believe myself, however, that a good plea might be made for her, based on the poem itself."

"And how?"

Madame du Pont cooked her opinions in a chafing dish in full view of the person to whom they were offered. She felt no need of a mental kitchen, and made no profession of a full larder. She rather preferred intellectual tidbits and trusted to the piquancy of her sauce to flavour the original material.

Never before having heard of either Andrea del Sarto or his wife, she was still quite ready to dash into a disquisition on their rival rights

and wrongs. The strife for truth more than triumph was quite beyond her ken. She was of the faction described by Bacon, who preferred what might be said to what should be thought.

With hardly an instant's pause she answered Dilke's question.

"Why, you detect at once that the artist was vain. He wished her to be always coupling his name with his superiors like Raphael and Michael Angelo. Then he never asks her anything about herself or about what she is doing. He paints away all day, and then wishes her to sit holding his hand all the evening. Now you see for yourself that that would make a very dull time for an active young woman."

"Especially with the cousin whistling under the window."

"No doubt she cared for the cousin because she saw that he cared for her—for her as she really was—not idealised, and not as material for pictures to save models."

"I can imagine you this Lucrezia," said Dilke. "You would have been willing that a man should sell his soul for you and you would have felt, as she did, that he was well repaid by a smile or by permission to hold your hand."

"You think it is not in me really to care for anyone?"

"Perhaps in response to indifference, not to reward passion with love."

Madame du Pont looked full at Dilke for one instant. He understood now why Newbold compared her eyes to the sea.

"Do you know," she said as if seeking to change the current of her thoughts, "what woman, of all whom we know, would tire soonest of the man she married?"

"I know the one whom you have in mind," Dilke answered slowly.

"Joyce Eldridge?"

"Precisely."

"I think so. With Joyce fatuousness is final, and with all due regard for your sex, most men are fatuous now and then."

"Thanks for the qualification!"

"Yes," Madame du Pont went on, not heeding Dilke's ironical comment; "that is why she admires Mr. Brandyce so much. I suppose in writing to space and all that, he learned to edit his remarks so that they come out in final and restrained form."

Dilke looked out to sea across the interminable swell of recurrent waves.

"You would like to see that marriage come about, would you not?" he said at length.

"The likings of outsiders have so little to do

with bringing marriages about!" Madame du Pont answered non-committally.

"That is not true of you," Dilke answered, with brutal directness. "You intended to bring this one about from the moment when you heard that Brandyce might come in for a title. That was why you challenged me to that chess tournament. You did not intend to leave even a pawn where it might obstruct your game."

"You think me——?"

"I think you very adroit. You resolved at once to take possession of me, to put me out of harm's way, though you took no interest whatever in me personally."

"Perhaps I did not then. How did you know?"

"It is one of the stupidities of clever people to underrate the cleverness of stupid ones. I am not quite a fool. Don't you suppose that if I had chosen I could have brushed away your scheming with my little finger?"

"You are a strong man. That is why I admire you."

"It chanced," Dilke went on, ignoring the compliment, "that your plans suited mine, therefore I lent myself to them. At the same time I had much interest in watching you play the game."

"You despised me, then."

Dilke made no answer.

"And you despised me again for what I told you about the Senator?"

"No. There you mistake. I liked you for that. It was the first hint I had that you could be frank."

"And I—I have regretted it ever since. You see at that time it did not occur to me that I could ever care what you thought of me."

"Yes," said Dilke, "it is often like that, is it not? We play our parts best before an unknown public. As our audience assumes personality it grows more embarrassing."

"You think me hard and scheming. Well, let it be so. But there is one thing you can never know, and that is the woman I might have been. What was that line in the poem you were reading? 'So free we seem, so fettered fast we are!' Do you believe in destiny?"

"I believe in a kind of destiny—probably not your kind."

"What kind?"

"I subscribe to the idea of destiny which defines it as an equation between temperament and circumstances."

"That sounds discouraging. There is so little hope of changing either."

"I don't know. The struggle is interesting,

It is the spirit in which your born gambler goes into the game, not for the pleasure of winning, but for the pure enjoyment of play."

"Do you think that we can influence destiny?"

"More or less—not only our own but that of others. I think that you could influence Mr. Eldridge's, for instance."

"I—! influence Uncle Martin. How little you know him! Even Joyce has no influence in that quarter."

"She least of all, perhaps. She cares too much what he thinks. He needs someone who can entertain him, and yet when occasion arises, treat him as if he did not exist."

"But the trouble is that on those occasions he treats me as if I did not exist. As for Joyce, she is growing intolerant. She is always looking about for some altar upon which to sacrifice herself. Her father suited her admirably as long as he was a cheerful altar; but she did not like vinegar poured over her burnt offerings. What do you suppose made Uncle Martin a pessimist?"

"My dear Madame du Pont, to make a pessimist out of an egotist, you need only give him every wish of his heart. Philosophic pessimism is a creed which many great men have reluctantly adopted after a profound study of human conditions. Practical pessimism like Mr. Eld-

ridge's is a formulated irritation over trifling inconveniences."

"I never know what to say to Uncle Martin when he is in one of his rages," Madame du Pont protested. "I generally change the subject or ask him something about business."

"Ah!" said Dilke. "That is why I want you to help me, because you know when to speak and when to be silent. It is a great gift."

"I shall be glad to help you," Madame du Pont answered, "if only in return for the help that you have given me here." She pointed the remark with a glance at Joyce and Brandyce.

Dilke bit his lip.

"Pardon me," he said, "but I do not wish to leave you under a misapprehension. It has not been my intention to render any help in that quarter, but simply to remain neutral. I am not a conspirator, but simply an onlooker."

"There was a time," Madame du Pont said slowly, looking up at the clouds as she spoke, "when I thought that you were interested in Miss Eldridge."

"A strange delusion! And when did you discover your mistake?"

"Oh, as I have watched you. Your indifference has been quite palpable. Even Joyce has noticed it."

"Has she spoken of it?"

"Only in passing. She said that your manner had suffered a sea change; that in Paris you had been so friendly, and here on the voyage you had seemed positively to avoid her."

"I should not suppose that she would have had time to notice anyone's manner except Brandyce's."

"Ah!" exclaimed Madame du Pont. "No indifference there. His manner is all that a lover's should be."

While Madame du Pont was speaking, Joyce and Brandyce came up and joined them. "We have come," Joyce said, "to ask if you would join us in a game of shuffleboard."

Dilke rose with alacrity. He began to feel that a continuance of his conversation with Madame du Pont was beyond his powers, that he was being stretched on the rack of the inquisition, and that in a few moments more he should have cried out his secrets to the winds and waves.

"An excellent idea," he assented; "let us go."

Madame du Pont regarded the interruption as ill-timed, but no one would have guessed her state of mind from the smiling eagerness with which she rose to comply. Before she could speak, however, the ship's doctor came up rather hastily and drew Dilke aside. The others walked on. A few moments later Dilke rejoined them.

"I am sorry," he said, "but I am afraid that you will be obliged to find another man to make the fourth at your game. A sailor has fallen down a hatchway and broken his leg. Doctor Vogel thinks it will be necessary to amputate it—an ugly job with the sea rolling as it is now. He wants me to help him. He has strained his wrist and does not trust himself to operate.

"Will he really need you?" inquired Madame du Pont.

"Not only does he need me, but we need someone else to help us administer the chloroform."

"Can't I do it?" Joyce asked eagerly.

"No, no!"

"I am not in the least afraid."

Dilke hesitated.

"Do you really think that you could? Remember the first time we met."

Joyce looked up indignantly. "Do you think I faint on all occasions?" she asked. "I assure you that I am a reasonable human being and quite capable of conducting myself as such. Only try me!"

"Take *me*, Dilke!" said Brandyce.

"Very well, Brandyce, we can use you too; but I have a notion that if Miss Eldridge is sure of herself, it will be a comfort to the poor fellow to see a woman about. Let me feel your hand,"

he said, turning to Joyce. "I think you will do. Come, then, both of you, if you will."

"The chloroform is on the stand," Dilke said briefly, as Joyce entered the cabin a little later, where all the grim preparations for surgery were completed. "Put a few drops in the inhaler and hold it over the face, not too close. Give him a little air at first. Turn toward his head and don't look round. Now, Doctor, I am ready if you are. Will you watch the heart?"

Silence reigned in the little cabin. Joyce strove to fix her attention wholly on the wet cloth in her hand. Behind her she heard the drawing of a knife. An eternity seemed to pass while, oblivious of all that was passing around her, she struggled to concentrate her attention on mastering a horrible sinking sensation at her heart.

"Now lend a hand with the dressing," she heard Dilke say at last. Joyce felt blood swim before her eyes.

"It is all over, Miss Eldridge," Dilke's voice rang out in reassuring tones, and then she heard him say hastily to Doctor Vogel: "You and Brandyce get the man into his berth! I will take Miss Eldridge to her cabin."

Joyce swayed unsteadily.

"Take my arm and shut your eyes."

Joyce stretched out her hand blindly and

grasped the supporting arm. She staggered into the corridor, and then fell to the floor.

Dilke raised her in his arms and strode along to her cabin door, which he opened with a kick of his foot. He laid Joyce in the berth and dashed water in her face. Her eyes opened slightly. "I was a fool," she murmured.

"I was worse than a fool to permit you to make such an experiment," Dilke answered hotly. "I should have remembered that day in New York——"

"You did not permit me. I did it myself. And really, I do not often behave so foolishly," Joyce responded with the ghost of a smile. Then "the fringed curtain of her eyes" closed again over the pale cheek.

Dilke rang sharply. When the steward came he said: "Bring me brandy at once, and then find Madame du Pont and send her here."

The man disappeared, and Dilke knelt beside Joyce, chafing her cold hands between his own hot ones. Then, overcome by the tide of feeling which swept over him, he stooped his head and kissed the white wrist. "I love you, dear!" he cried, "I love you—I love you!"

A rustle behind him caught his ear, and rising hastily, he saw Madame du Pont standing in the doorway. The steward had executed the last part of the order first.

Émile du Pont's face was as white as the door against which she leaned. Her hair glistened red around her pale forehead. Her lips moved, but no sound would come.

Dilke looked at her with defiant confession in his eyes.

"Yes," he said, "I love her. You heard me say it and you may repeat it to the world. You see now how little your training in reading a man's mind amounted to—I love her." Then, with a sudden change of voice: "The steward is standing outside with the brandy. Be good enough to hand it to me!"

Still without a word, Madame du Pont handed him the flask and the glass. She might have been an automaton moved only by the will of the man before her.

Dilke half filled the glass with the spirits, added water from the stand and forced it down the girl's throat. It did its work. The eyelids fluttered and then rose. The colour crept back to the white cheek, the fingers warmed in Dilke's clasp.

"Did I do any harm?" Joyce asked in a weak voice.

"You helped us to save a life. But we will talk about that later."

"Is that you, Émilie?"

"It is I," Madame du Pont answered in level tones.

"I will leave her to you, Madame," Dilke said. "Open her dress and keep her head low. I will see her in an hour; and, remember, please, no conversation."

Then he went out. As he strode toward the deck, he muttered to himself: "Now I have thrown away my last chance of saying anything about Brandyce."

CHAPTER XV

COUNTERCLAIMS

It was a grey, sullen day, a day symbolic of the fatigue of the whole human race. A fitful, feeble breeze lifted the fog here and there and scattered it in whiffs of spray along the deck.

On such a morning one wakes with a sense of heaviness. Time creeps leaden chained instead of flying with spread wings. In place of an hour-glass he carries an iron weight, and the edge of his scythe is dulled so that it cuts no swift swathe, but hacks painfully at the grain of life.

Dilke rose early and stumbled through the companionway to a deck still slippery from the sailors' swabbing. To his surprise, he saw Joyce Eldridge in her steamer chair with a cup of coffee in her hand. As it was the last day of the voyage, he resolved to put aside his determination to avoid her and to indulge himself in one more conversation.

"You are out early," he said, dropping into the chair beside her.

"Yes. It is not that I love the deck more, but my stateroom less."

"You are none the worse, I hope, for yesterday's experiences."

"Not in the least. And, you know, I think that such an experience is worth all it costs in what it teaches one of other people's lives. How is the sailor?"

"Oh, he is coming on finely. He talks of you incessantly, and he made me promise to give you this. It is his chief treasure."

As he spoke, Dilke spread out on Joyce's lap a large red cotton handkerchief covered with anchors and with a border of shell pattern.

"It is beautiful," said Joyce, with decision. "I shall keep it always. Would you think me unappreciative if I—er—had it washed?"

Dilke threw back his head, and laughed as he had not laughed for weeks. "I believe," he said, "that when your halo is handed to you in heaven, you will take out your handkerchief and dust it, lest it may have been too promiscuously handled by the other angels——"

"It might be a wise precaution. I will try to remember it," Joyce answered demurely. "But I assure you I shall cherish this memento on earth. It will remind me of the sea, and I do love the sea—from the land."

"You must be a good sailor to be up at all in a swell like this."

"A good sailor—I? Oh, no! I rather detest an ocean voyage. I feel buffeted and blown about, as I used to feel after a discussion with you on one of our Swiss walks."

"You 'rather detested' those, then, perhaps."

"Certainly. So would you if you had been as thoroughly worsted as I—not that you were always right; but I could not make you see my point of view."

"Precisely what was your point of view?"

"I remember only that I was very strong somewhere; but you were always saying: 'Don't you admit this?' or 'Do I understand you to say that?' till I felt my feet slipping from under me, as they did this morning on the wet deck."

"I must have been very irritating."

"No, not irritating; but depressingly convincing."

"Why depressing?"

"Oh, you always seemed like a pilgrim to the tomb of truth; reverent, you know, but as if it were all quite dead."

Dilke smiled. "A few things seem alive to me still, however," he said.

"What things, for instance?"

"It is too prosaic an hour of the day to mention love. So let me say friendship."

"Ah—so you think friendship is an all-day theme, while love must be reserved for an occasional sentimental hour. 'It follows, then,' as you used to say, that friendship is the more durable stuff—more lasting—wears better."

"It is more temperate, certainly—more sure. Friendship is a philosophy; love, a religion."

Miss Eldridge balanced her spoon on the edge of her cup—a difficult feat, taking into account the motion of the ship.

"I understand," she said, watching the spoon. "You are a philosopher and an infidel."

"Say rather a doubter ready to be convinced."

"Do you think a man would do more for friendship or for love?" Joyce asked.

"Perhaps he would *do* more for friendship, but he would endure more for love. Friendship starves if it is not fed by good will, but love can live on astonishingly meagre fare."

"There love and I part company," exclaimed Miss Eldridge with a light laugh, rising from her chair and throwing off her rug, "for I feel a distinctly normal and friendly appetite for breakfast."

Thus trivially ended the conversation which Dilke had entered upon with trembling eagerness. He had no further speech with Joyce. Early in the day he saw her sitting a little apart

from the others engaged in earnest and apparently engrossing talk with Brandyce. Dilke's own chair was so near that he could not avoid catching scraps of their conversation.

"It is all true, what you observe about subtleties holding us," Brandyce was saying. "I am sure that is why I think about you so much. I am always trying to match what you say to-day with what you said yesterday, and wondering if they can be made to fit."

"Am I so inconsistent as all that?"

"I do not call it being inconsistent," Brandyce answered; "I call it being fearlessly yourself. But it seems as though you were two people at once, and the two did not always agree. One of them rushes on headlong and impetuous, and then the other comes along and closes her lips or makes some little formal decorous speech as if to cover up the impetuosity. Do you not recognise it in yourself?"

"Yes, I do; of course I do. I feel so sure sometimes that a thing is right that I rush in, and then in the middle of it I begin to feel how foolish it has all been, and I try weakly to go back or to stop where I am."

"Yes, but it is the headlong things which you do that make people care for you so much."

"That ends it," said Dilke to himself. "I am watching the close of the comedy. God

grant that it may not be the beginning of a tragedy for her!" And to avoid further eavesdropping he rose and moved his chair farther along the deck beside that of Madame du Pont.

At dinner Joyce did not appear. Her father said that she had a headache. Dilke felt a bitter satisfaction that at least she was not spending this last evening in Brandyce's society.

For himself Dilke had little taste for company, and stood alone by the railing in the darkness chewing the cud of exceeding bitter thoughts. At length he could bear it no longer—the darkness, the solitude, the thoughts. He lighted a cigar and entered the smoking room. It was not an easy matter for a man measuring six feet two inches in height to make entrance or exit through that low doorway, and he was compelled to stoop. When he raised his head the electric lights half blinded him after the darkness outside.

As his eyes grew accustomed to the brightness, he saw that the cabin was almost empty. Three men occupied the centre. The ship's doctor stood looking on at a game of cards played by Brandyce with a man from Texas, named Colby. The Texan was of thin, wiry build like the typical Yankee of fifty years ago. His arms were long and loose jointed but evidently powerful. His face was shaped like

a hatchet, and two long front teeth held down visibly the lower lip.

Dilke never knew what game it was which Colby and Brandyce were playing. He only knew that a roll of bills lay on the table between them, and that as he came forward, he saw the Texan study his cards, take a keen look at Brandyce and then reach out toward the roll of bills. As he put the bills and cards together into his pocket, he said calmly, turning toward the ship's doctor: "That man is cheating. The cards are marked and he has two aces in his sleeve."

As Dilke listened to Colby's insult, he suddenly felt the breath of the primeval forest on his forehead, and the crackling of a campfire was in his ears. The fire itself seemed to leap in his blood. He sprang upon the Texan with uplifted arm. The doctor threw himself in his way; but in his rush of rage he would have brushed him aside like a fly. What stopped him was Brandyce's extended hand waving him away, Brandyce's white face and Brandyce's shaking voice, as he said low and unsteadily: "The matter is not worth a scandal. Better come away!"

As Brandyce dropped his arm, two cards were shaken out of his sleeve and lay upon the cabin floor. Each bore one accusing spot of scarlet

on its face. He stood for an instant looking down at them. Then without a word, he turned and went out into the night.

Dilke felt the blood rush to his face till it scorched his forehead. He was humiliated, as if he had done this thing himself. "Gentlemen," he said, coming up to the table, "there is nothing to be said of the situation. It is as bad as it can be. But I am under obligation to Captain Brandyce for an immense service. I should be glad to help him if I could. I trust that you will not feel obliged to mention this—this most unfortunate occurrence."

"I'm satisfied if he is," Colby observed with a sardonic smile, fingering the bills in his pocket. "Only I hope they're not going to let him marry that pretty girl."

Dilke set his teeth and clenched his fists; but he spoke no word.

"For my part," observed Doctor Vogel "it is for my interest to hold my tongue. It would hurt the line to have it known that we had card sharpers on board; and besides, after the way you helped me with the sailor, I wouldn't go back on a friend of yours."

A friend of his! Yes, Brandyce was his friend. Dilke himself had just admitted as much; but it is one thing to call a man that, and another to have it said by a third party.

Dilke made no answer. He was sick and stunned. He turned on his heel and followed Brandyce out into the darkness. It was good to be rid of the lights, of the odious accusing presence of the two men. He wished to be alone and to think.

It was the last moment that he would have chosen in which to be put to a critical test; but fate seems to take malign pleasure in seizing the occasion when our guard is down and our armour unbraced to spring an assault upon us. Happy is the man who can look back on a supreme crisis and feel that he met it as he would have wished afterward that he had met it.

As Dilke groped his way along the deck, he almost ran against Mr. Eldridge, who was pacing the deck also.

"Ah, Dilke!" he said. "I am glad to have stumbled upon you. I was intending to hunt you up. The fact is, I want to have a talk with you, a confidential talk. Shall we walk, or find seats somewhere?"

"Let us walk, by all means," replied Dilke, who felt that physical movement was essential and that repose would be intolerable. He was grateful for the onward rush of the steamer, as if its energy were the expression of his own excited mood.

"Very well; let us walk, then."

Dilke wheeled about and mechanically fell into step with Mr. Eldridge. He told himself that talk would be a relief from the remembrance of that scene in the smoking room, and yet he had a haunting sense of trouble in the air.

It was a long while before Mr. Eldridge opened the subject on which he wished to speak, and Dilke made no effort to help him. In fact, he felt an inward dread of what might be coming, which made him long to turn and run away.

"Dilke," said Mr. Eldridge at last, "I want to make some inquiries, some very particular inquiries, about this friend of yours, Captain Brandyce."

The words "card sharper" still rang in Dilke's ears, and he answered hastily, "Not my friend. You know I explained to you at the outset that he was only an acquaintance."

"Very well. Then it will be all the easier for us to be quite outspoken together. I have been taken aback in the last two or three days to find how far things have gone between Brandyce and my little girl. I have meant to watch and guard her as—as her mother would have wished. But she always has men around her. She's an attractive girl, you know; at least I think so?"

The last remark was put almost as a question; but Dilke's heart was beating so quickly that he could not speak. He only bowed.

"Her manner has always been so cool to everyone," Mr. Eldridge went on, "that it never occurred to me that she would think of marriage for years to come. Yet here in this little week she has given her heart away."

"She has told you so?"

"No, she has not told me. Indeed, I have never spoken with her on the subject. Somehow I couldn't—I was never intimate with Joyce. Men make a great mistake not to be intimate with their children; it is so much harder to talk over things. I suppose the habit slipped by in those years when I was shut up with myself and my gloomy thoughts; but that's neither here nor there. I see this affair going on between Joyce and Brandyce, and I want to know from you if it's all right."

Dilke's lips felt stiff and dry, and his voice seemed to come from over the starboard rail as he answered, striving to temporise:

"From what I know of Miss Eldridge, I should doubt if anyone could stop an affair in which her heart was really engaged."

"She's my daughter," Mr. Eldridge burst out angrily, "and I intend to have some say about the man she marries. She shall not marry a cad."

Suddenly his voice broke, and he said, with a tenderness as passionate as his anger: "You don't know how I love that child—no one would know it, I suppose. My temper has made a breach between us. That temper has been my greatest enemy. It spoiled the life of my wife, the sweetest woman who ever lived—yes, and the most beautiful and the most patient. It spoiled her life," he repeated, "and I don't want Joyce's life to be spoiled. I want her to marry a man who will make her happy."

Dilke found it impossible to break the silence which fell as Mr. Eldridge finished. At length he managed to stammer out: "I appreciate your feelings. I profoundly hope that your wishes for your daughter will be realised."

"I came to you not for sympathy but for help," Mr. Eldridge went on with an aggrieved air.

"I am sorry," Dilke answered, "but I am afraid that I cannot help you. I have known Captain Brandyce a comparatively short time, and I know nothing of his past."

"That's not it. That's not it at all," Mr. Eldridge declared testily. "I don't expect you to know anything of his past. The more questionable a man's past is the less anyone knows about it. What I am asking of you is some information about his present."

"He saved my life, you know."

"Yes, I remember your telling us about that. I have sometimes thought that Joyce's interest in Brandyce began there. She has always had romantic notions. She loves a hero. That is all very fine; but it is not enough. To my mind, the central point, the fundamental quality of a man's character, is honesty, as chastity is in a woman. Now what I want to ask you is this: Whether in all those weeks which you spent with Brandyce in the intimate association of camp life, you ever saw anything which suggested any shade of dishonesty."

"Never."

Mr. Eldridge's brow cleared. Perhaps he had been harassed, as Dilke had been, by vague impalpable suspicions. It was curious how Brandyce failed to be convincing even to those who liked him best.

Mr. Eldridge paused in his walk and held out his hand to Dilke with an air of relief.

"Then I have your word for it," he said, "that you believe Brandyce to be an honorable and trustworthy man, a safe husband for Joyce?"

Again Dilke felt the forest wind on his cheek, again he heard the crackle of the campfire, again his own words echoed in his ear: "If I can ever do anything for you, you may count upon me."

"In God's name how can I tell!" Dilke cried, tormented by the cruelty of a fate which was crushing him between the upper and nether millstones of opposing obligations. But Mr. Eldridge had no clue to his state of mind, and went on thinking aloud.

"Of course, of course, you can't tell," he said. "That is imposing too large a responsibility upon any man, to be asked to tell who would be a safe husband. But there is a haunting something which impels me to question you. Tell me simply this: In all the time you have known him, did you ever see him do a dishonourable act?"

Dilke paused for a single instant, as a man on the brink of suicide pauses on the edge of the cataract before he flings himself into inevitable disaster. He decided on his action and resolved to bear its consequences, consequences not only to himself but to another dearer than himself. A dry, dumb agony paralysed him. He submitted as if the weight of an inevitable destiny bore him down. He remembered his vow: "With my heart's blood I will help you if I can." He opened his lips to say "No," when the thought of Joyce Eldridge rose and choked him.

The memory of another vow loomed before him. He saw himself in his office in the grey dawn tearing in bits a pasteboard card, and he

heard himself registering an oath that never again under any circumstances, for any cause, would he soil his soul with the shadow of a lie.

He hesitated. Again the vision of Joyce rose before him—Joyce as she had looked in the reading room of the Parisian hotel when she had accepted his proffer of friendship and his promise of absolute truth-telling between her and him.

His hand shook as if he had the palsy. His cigar dropped to the slippery deck and rolled away.

"Don't ask me!" he groaned, and turned aside abruptly. But Mr. Eldridge caught him by the arm.

"I *shall* ask you," the old man went on with passionate insistence, "and I expect a truthful answer as from man to man. No fanciful question of gratitude or etiquette can stand for a moment in a case so urgent as this. You know something of Brandyce which you will not tell."

"Which I will not tell," echoed Dilke.

"That silence is an accusation."

"No," said Dilke, "it is not. The man who makes an accusation and refuses proofs is a blackguard. You drove me into this, step by step, till I had no recourse but a lie or refusal to speak. Now you may deal with the matter as you choose. Further I do not go for you or any man."

With this Dilke shook himself free of Mr. Eldridge's detaining hand, and moved rapidly toward the companionway. On his way down to the cabin he met Brandyce coming up. Which face was ghastlier it would have been hard to tell. Dilke would have passed without speaking, but Brandyce barred the way.

"I suppose it is all over the ship by this time," he whispered from between white lips.

"No," Dilke answered wearily. "Neither of those two men will tell. I took care of that. But——"

Then with that impulse which drives criminals on to confession because their burden is too heavy to be borne alone, Dilke went on:

"Mr. Eldridge asked me just now if I knew anything discreditable of you—if I had ever seen you do a dishonourable thing."

"Thank you, Dilke. You are a good friend. I know you stood by me. This is what you meant by saying you would pay the debt of your life on the instalment plan."

A convulsion passed over Dilke's face, leaving it stern and set and old.

"I refused to answer," he said.

"That was an answer in itself."

"Yes," said Dilke, and plunged down the stairway, pursued by the remembrance of Brandyce's glance.

CHAPTER XVI

DILKE MEETS AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE

"THANK heaven for work!" This was Dilke's exclamation as he seated himself once more before the desk in his office. "Thank heaven for work!" Have we not all felt the same thrill in our deepest mental storm and stress? It was surely no spirit of revenge, but a profound pity, which moved the angel of the flaming sword to drive out Adam and Eve into a world of forced activity. An idle Paradise is the saddest of all abiding places for those who remember and regret.

In the great crises of our lives we are dominated by some power seemingly outside ourselves which makes our action apparently inevitable as fate; but in the after days of relaxation comes a painful period of questioning when we ask ourselves: "After all, was the action so inevitable? Would not wiser men have avoided the crisis or have ruled it to different issues?"

Dilke's mind was full of such questionings. He was conscious of an oppression which would not be brushed away. When the ship touched

the dock he had made haste to escape from it as from a pest house. Evil spirits seemed to haunt its decks and cabins. Painful associations hung about it from stem to stern. He was thankful that Brandyce seemed as anxious as himself to avoid a meeting. They were like two criminals who dared not look in each other's faces for fear of the detection and reproach which each should read in the other.

Of Joyce and of her father Dilke had almost an equal terror, so he took refuge by the side of Madame du Pont and stood with her by the forward rail as the vessel left quarantine and moved slowly and majestically up the bay. He had fancied that with her at least there would be no awkwardness, no lurking thoughts underlying surface speech and making its trifling a mockery. But he had forgotten the episode in the stateroom, the almost brutal frankness of his revelation of his feeling for Joyce. Whatever the effect upon Madame du Pont, there could be no question that it had made an entire change in her manner. Though she was too much a woman of the world to betray resentment, there was a distinct withdrawal of all cordiality.

Dilke's mind, however, was too much occupied with other things to pay much heed to her coolness. Everything that had happened before

last night seemed blotted out, a mere background before which the terrible events of the past evening stood out in lurid relief. He wondered in his heart if other men on the ship were as miserable as he; if despair reigned in other souls while smiling lips made superficial comments on the growth of the city, the high buildings, the busy wharves of "the finest harbour in the world."

Madame du Pont spoke with interest, well feigned if it were not real, of the changes since she had been in the country last, and asked the names of the various towers and office buildings as they passed, yet perhaps she was no less glad than Dilke when the ship swung into her berth and the process of disembarking began.

After the customs examination, Dilke bade hasty farewells to the party. He experienced a sense of immense relief that the strained situation was drawing to an end. But when Mr. Eldridge grasped his hand at parting and said: "You will find that I am not ungrateful—I have written to a life insurance company in which I am interested, asking to have you appointed one of its medical directors," Dilke felt like a Judas receiving the thirty pieces of silver for the betrayal of a friend.

Even now, in his office, he could not put the scene of the smoking room behind him, could

not help framing in his mind the things which he might have said to Mr. Eldridge afterward; the evasions, which were no lies but only suppressions of the truth, which he might have produced if he had been clever enough. He told himself that there was deep wisdom in Bunyan's allegory which made the Town of Stupidity a near neighbour to the City of Destruction.

Then suddenly another mood seized him, and he blamed himself, not for having spoken the truth, but for having suppressed it so long. It was true that he owed a debt to Brandyce; but did he not owe a higher debt to the woman whom he loved? Ought he not at the beginning to have put Joyce on her guard, to have let fall some hint at least, which to a mind as quick as hers would have been a danger signal and would have prevented her leaping into love for this newcomer without a questioning, an investigation, a period of probation?

After all, could any construction of his obligation to Brandyce be carried so far as to involve a lowering of his own moral standards? The words of the old saint crossed his mind: "He who does an unworthy action in zeal for his friend, burns the golden thread which binds their hearts together." And Brandyce had not been even his friend, but only a stranger who held this strange mortgage on his life.

And Joyce? What, he wondered, had been the effect upon her of the revelation, if her father had discussed the matter with her. Had she argued, examined, insisted on further investigation and convincing proof? He decided that everything would depend on how deeply she was in love. Surface affection might be killed by doubts cast on her lover's integrity; but if she had really given her heart into this man's keeping, he felt sure from his knowledge of her that not crime itself could loosen her hold, and that suffering and ignominy would only make her cling the closer. It was a true knowledge of human nature which led a sad heart to cry out that a woman who loved could sooner stay away from the Transfiguration than from the foot of the Cross.

From these thoughts which constantly tormented him, Dilke sought relief in the routine of daily labour, in looking up his old patients, in study and in the sorting of the mail which had accumulated in the weeks of his absence, since he had ordered it held.

Among the first letters which he opened was one from his mother. It ran as follows:

"PIERIA, October 20th.

"*My Dear Tony:*

"I hope you will be pleased to hear that I am thinking of paying you a visit this fall, if you can find me an abiding place near you. I have been saving the six-

pences for the purpose. Even my beloved grey cat, who used to enrage you by curling up in your arm chair, has been included in the economies and put on a diet of milk instead of cream. But there is a satisfaction in economies when they procure a great pleasure, so I am enjoying mine.

"I wonder if you have been thinking of me as constantly as I of you during these past months of absence——"

Here Dilke laid down the letter and gave himself up to the compunctions of conscience. Alas, how seldom thoughts of his mother had crossed his mental vision of late! When a man is living intensely, the drama of his own life is too absorbing to be interrupted by thoughts of the absent. The *dramatis personæ* on the immediate scene occupy his whole attention, and the rest of the world exists only in a haze of vague memories and half perceptions.

Now that his mother's letter brought her more vividly to mind, he was forced to confess that it was not with pure joy that he thought of her and of her project of coming to New York. If it had been last year! But no, that would not have suited him either. He felt that he would wish to share his joys with his mother. He was sure that he would wish to share her griefs with her; but his own griefs and chagrins he preferred to keep to himself.

An acknowledged sorrow may gain relief by

expression; but for those festering inward wounds, unexplained and unexplainable, there is no balm save in "silence and slow time."

Dilke drew pen and paper hastily toward him and began a response. He found it so difficult that he was compelled to tear up three sheets of paper before he had composed a letter which satisfied him, and after all, it rang false in his own ear as he read it over. He could only hope that it would not betray itself to his mother. He had emphasised his love for her, his appreciation of her goodness in making such a journey, and he could not tell her how much he should look forward to seeing her. But it would be only tantalising to have her near when he could not spend a great deal of time with her. At present, he told her, he was absorbed in the task of resuming practice and all the rearrangement which it involved; but a little later, in the Christmas holidays, perhaps, he should be more his own master, and then they would enjoy New York together. How much they would have to say to each other and how much he would enjoy telling her of his travels! If she could bring with her some of the little rose cakes which she used to make for him, they would be deeply appreciated by her devoted son, Anthony Dilke.

The letter finished, Dilke folded and sealed it

with a sigh of relief. Then he betook himself to professional business.

Dilke had told the Eldridges that he should not see them for some days, as his private affairs would require regulating, and both father and daughter had assented with a readiness which gave him satisfaction at the time, but now he was tormented by an uncontrollable desire to see Joyce and judge for himself how she was bearing her trial.

As the days went on, he picked up the paper each morning with a nervous dread, and turned at once to the society column, half expecting to read the announcement of Joyce's engagement. In a way he felt that it would be almost a relief, since then, at all events, his sense of responsibility would be at an end, and suspense was worse than certainty.

One morning, in his customary search, his eye was arrested, not by the notice which he sought but by one which surprised him more—the announcement of the engagement of Senator Jacob Penhallow Secor and of Madame Émilie du Pont, widow of M. Caravel du Pont, once a Secretary of the French Legation at Washington. "The wedding," the announcement went on to say, "will be in Paris in the spring. Senator Secor will return with his bride to Washington, where he is building a magnificent house

with very original decorations, which are the work of Mr. Brackett Newbold."

Dilke leaned back in his chair and gasped with amazement. Jacob Secor married to Madame du Pont! He could as soon fancy Caliban wedded to Cleopatra. So this was the Senator concerning whom Madame du Pont had flattered him with a confidence there on the steamer! He had almost forgotten the fact of Secor's election to the Senate following his successful candidacy for the lower house, so completely had Pieria and all its affairs slipped out of his life. It was all like a scene in a comedy and impossible to take seriously. As his mind rapidly rehearsed his interview with Émilie du Pont, he became more and more convinced that she had intended to add his broken heart to her collection of such trifles. The conviction both amused and irritated him.

"No, no, my lady!" he exclaimed half aloud. "A man who has seen the best and loved it, does not fall victim to charms such as yours."

Then he fell to reviewing Secor's career, and asked himself in bitterness of spirit: "Is there any success in America that money cannot win? Are there any customs so nice that they will not courtesy to the great kings of finance? Can a man be so bad that society will not accept him, if his rating in Bradstreet's be high enough?"

The next day brought him a note from Joyce asking him to dine with them on Friday of the following week to meet Senator Secor, who was to be in town for a few days only. "I take it for granted," Joyce said in closing, "that you have seen the announcement in the papers of his engagement to my cousin, which is, I do not doubt, as great a surprise to you as it is to us."

Dilke accepted the invitation with avidity. He was overwhelmed with curiosity to encounter Jacob Secor in these new relations and surroundings. Above all, he experienced an overmastering desire to see him with Madame du Pont, since his imagination absolutely refused to couple them.

It was some time after eight o'clock on the night of the dinner when Dilke entered the Eldridges' drawing room. He had been delayed by attendance upon a very sick patient, and was one of the last guests. Mr. Eldridge indeed looked at his watch conspicuously as Dilke came in; but the malefactor only smiled. He felt that he had a good excuse and intended to present it in due time, but not at the point of a pistol or the click of a watch.

As Dilke paused for a moment in the doorway, his eye took in the various rearrangements and improvements wrought by Madame du

Pont's taste—the sofa at right angles with the fireplace and with its back to the window, the tête-à-tête easy chairs, the low, well-shaded lights.

The party was large, of diverse ages and varying degrees of importance. By the fire stood a leading financier in talk with Madame du Pont. Near by, her grey hair showing white against the black oak of the chair in which she sat, was Mrs. Fenwick, calmly surveying the company. In the corner, a fashionable architect, the designer of the new Secor mansion, was devoting himself, with professional civility, to a heavy dowager in green brocade. In the centre stood Senator Secor talking with Joyce. Instinctively and unreasonably, a wave of resentment swept over Dilke and caused him to bite his lip hard. What business had a man like that to be so near her!

But in spite of his resentment, in spite of all the recollections of Secor and his past, Dilke was forced to an unwilling recognition that outwardly a great change had swept over the man. In these two brief years he had assumed a wholly new air and bearing. His slouching carriage was transformed to an erect one. His few months of public life had given him a distinguished enunciation and an impressive manner which lent a fictitious importance to his utter-

ances, so that listeners felt that they had only themselves to blame if they failed to discern the significance of his remarks.

Dilke looked eagerly at Joyce, striving to judge whether she too were under this man's spell; but he quickly decided that she stood quite apart from Secor's sphere of influence and was drawing him on by her air of gentle inquiry to lay bare his character before those shrewd young eyes, which saw more from under their drooping lids than swims into the ken of most people's full-orbed vision. All this Dilke took in during the instant while he paused in the doorway. Then he greeted his hostess, and made his way to Mrs. Fenwick.

"Were you surprised at this marriage?" she asked in cautious tones of Dilke as he stood beside her.

"Very much," he answered.

"What do you think of it?"

"I think it accords admirably with the fitness of things."

"At least it is likely to secure the happiness of two people."

"You are sure that they will be happy?"

"Oh, not they! I was thinking of the people whom they might have married."

Dilke raised his eyebrows and smiled.

"You are severe upon them both," he said.

"Yet the world will call the marriage a judicious one for him and a brilliant one for her."

Mrs. Fenwick waved her fan slowly to and fro. "I question," she said, "whether there is such a thing as a brilliant marriage in America. A republic, in doing away with rank, makes the social struggle a farce—money, publicity, one may attain; but in a few years, a turn of fortune's wheel brings obscurity, and then what is left of a marriage of ambition except its bonds? I should pity Émilie except that she deserves her fate. She has chosen it with her eyes open. It is the natural result of the development of her character. As to the fitness of a widow's marrying again, I do not presume to speak; but at least she should choose with a discretion which does credit to her acquired experience."

"Madame du Pont will enjoy the opportunities of Washington life."

"Oh, yes, she will be prominent, and prominence is dear to Émilie's soul. She will fill her place to perfection. The Washington of to-day is not the Washington that I used to know. Émilie will find herself in congenial surroundings and in an environment which will show her husband to the best advantage."

Dinner was announced, and the forced talk which precedes that signal changed to an air of cheerful anticipation. Dilke gave his arm

to Miss Jermaine, the young woman whose name he had found on his card. He suspected Joyce of having chosen her in a spirit of mockery, in return for the lectures which Miss Eldridge had received from him on the subject of athletics. Surely it should have been a pleasure to any student of hygiene to escort this vigorous young golf champion. Dilke divined her honours as soon as she drew off her gloves and he saw her brown, muscular arms against the white of her gown; but he was not left long to the guidance of suspicion, for Miss Jermaine began at once on the relative merits of the links at Baltusrol and Ardsley.

Dilke listened and assumed an interest if he had it not, all the time wondering what town-bred gallant would have the courage to offer his protection to this buxom young woman who looked quite able to fight her own battles and protect her protector if necessary. Then he wisely reflected that his rôle was not that of protection but of a decent civility, and he strove to give his whole attention to the mysteries of tees and putters, and the incredible villainy of caddies in searching industriously for balls which they had secreted in their pockets.

In a pause of the conversation Joyce turned to him and said: "Senator Secor tells me that he is a native of Pieria. How does it happen that you do not know each other?"

"We have never met, but we have had some correspondence," Dilke answered stiffly, wondering if Secor knew anything of his connection with the affair of the library.

"Do not force me, Miss Eldridge," the Senator interpolated, "to confess to the greater number of my years which prevented my knowing Doctor Dilke personally. I had left Pieria before he began practice there. But I had some correspondence with him, and I have watched his professional career with interest. Last year when I was in New York I chanced to be strolling down one of the avenues when my attention was attracted by a singular sign in the window. It was gone the next day. Do you still practise pagan healing, Doctor Dilke?"

Dilke coloured to his temples and Joyce, noting it, rushed to his rescue. "There is no kind of healing at which Doctor Dilke is not an adept," she said. "Some day when he is as well known as Sir Morell McKenzie, for instance, we shall claim him as our discovery. By the way, who are your leading physicians in Washington? You have good ones, I trust, for my cousin's sake. Her health is not so strong as it seems."

The conversation was successfully diverted, but not before the men's glances had met like the crossing of swords. Secor's was a challenge.

"We both have our secrets," it said. "Spare me or beware of me!"

Jacob Secor had made it the practice of a lifetime to possess himself, so far as he was able, of any disagreeable secret touching the past of every man with whom he came in contact. Although he had never heard of Machiavelli, he was fully alive to the wisdom of his maxim that to the man who would be great, two courses are open: to conciliate or to crush. Of the two he preferred the former, but it was always well to hold the latter in reserve.

Dilke took up his glass of champagne and drained it. Then he turned and strove to give his attention once more to his neighbour; but he answered "yes" or "no" at random, and soon he had informed her that he went to Palm Beach every year, that he liked the life there, but was sorry to be away at midwinter, because one missed so many cotillions, and all the time he was wholly unconscious of these flagrant misstatements. His real conversation was with himself.

"Scorned—to be scorned by one that I scorn,
Is that a matter to make me fret?"

Yes, by Jove, it is the hardest thing there is to bear. To lose the right to feel superior to a man whom I hold contemptible is the lowest

depth of self-abasement. That damning sign was only in the window for one day. Why should Jacob Secor of all men have been the one to see it?"

We can never look upon any action as dead and buried. Our deeds are like Wandering Jews which may rise on any street corner to confront us, and we may be sure it will always be when we desire their acquaintance least.

The dinner seemed to Dilke to drag on endlessly. Would it never be done! The cigars alone with the men were not so bad; but he was thankful when it was time to join the ladies.

In a spirit of defiance of Secor, Dilke walked directly over to Madame du Pont. She had laid aside her mourning and wore a dress spangled with gold. Fillets of gold leaves bound the ripples of her hair, looking dulled beside its lustre.

"You have come to congratulate me?" she said smiling, though her lips were drawn.

This time Dilke was so little moved by emotion that evasion came trippingly to his tongue.

"Not I!" he answered, smiling too. "When a man has carried off a charming woman, there is a distinct sense of injury in the rest of us which forbids our congratulating *her*, whatever we may feel toward *him*."

"You still play games well," said Madame du Pont, looking up at him.

"I have been under the instruction of a skilful teacher, Madame," Dilke replied.

"Émilie," said Mr. Eldridge, "Mr. Winthrop, Senator Secor's architect, wishes to meet you and to talk about the house with you."

"Yes," said Mr. Winthrop, a tall, slender man who stooped a little as if under the weight of a mass of hair falling over his forehead, "I have been noting a curious thing, and wishing to ask you if there were any explanation of the coincidence. To-day I received Mr. Newbold's coloured sketch for the decorations of the Senator's main hall. They promise to be fine, by the way; but to-night as I have sat looking at you, I could have taken my oath that the main figure was a portrait of you—a very pretty compliment certainly. Is it by the Senator's orders?"

Madame du Pont answered with one of her smiles of dubious interpretation, neither affirming nor denying. That smile had stood her in good stead on many occasions. There is nothing like a smile for conveying an impression without committing one afterward.

"A portrait of Émilie!" Mr. Eldridge exclaimed. "Are you sure it was intentional?"

"You shall judge for yourself," Mr. Winthrop

answered. "I have had the drawings photographed and reduced. I brought them to-night, thinking that Madame du Pont would be interested."

As he spoke, he drew from his pocket three or four photographs and handed them to Madame du Pont, who laid them in her lap and took up the first, which was a reproduction of the central panel to be placed above the grand stairway.

Dilke, who stood above her, felt his eyes drawn toward it almost against his will. As he looked, he was amazed at the idealising power which art and love combined can give. There stood Madame du Pont—the likeness was unmistakable; but how transfigured! This goddess of hospitality was something more than the woman who had inspired and suggested it could ever comprehend. Here was a spirit breathing gracious warmth. The red hair was transformed to a hazy aureole about her head, the Greek draperies left her rounded arm bare. One hand, white and slender, was extended as if in welcome. Her foot was poised lightly on a cloud, and underneath the picture ran the inscription which Dilke recalled so clearly, scrawled in red chalk under the pastel sketch in Newbold's studio, the lines from a Greek poet:

"Her feet are tender, for she sets her steps
Not on the earth; but on the hearts of men."

For an instant Dilke's wrath was swallowed up in admiration. Then a wave of indignant protest rose in his soul as he thought of that gentle, loyal spirit serving the lady of his dreams in a distant land, while she sat here, a smile of pleased vanity on her lips, indifferent, wholly indifferent to the wound which she had dealt.

"Through what unworthy channels great inspirations may come to a man, and after all, how fortunate a thing it is that, whatever the romancer may tell us, love is not the only thing in life. If it were, a man might as well go out and hang himself when he loses the woman he loves. But men like Newbold have a blessed consolation in their devotion to their craft. He will come out of this experience a greater artist, and, I believe, a stronger man."

All this Dilke was saying to himself while he studied the photograph which he had taken up and held in his hand. As he returned it to Madame du Pont, he observed aloud: "It is wonderfully done, and as Mr. Winthrop says, a very subtle compliment. I trust, Madame, that its associations, as well as its beauty, will give you great pleasure."

"Thank you," Madame du Pont exclaimed, quite mistress of herself now. "I hope that you will see it in place some day and permit the

goddess of hospitality to welcome you in Washington."

"Perhaps Newbold and I may see it together some time. It would be most interesting to watch his satisfaction in his work."

"Yes, Mr. Newbold is an artist to the finger tips. Nothing in the world but his painting would really ever satisfy him."

It was all like an eighteenth century comedy, the talk between these two, so innocent of under meaning to those who stood about, so charged with intent to the speakers. Dilke meant that this woman should catch the covert sneer in his voice. She did, and met it with defiant eyes and smiling lips. Yet if he could have known the pain at her heart he might have forgiven her much. As she looked up at that indignant face bent over her, she realised with a swift pang that here was the one man whom she might have loved. Not even to herself would she admit that he was the man whom she did love. That long misery of knowledge was reserved for the years to come.

In response to Madame du Pont's last words Dilke simply bowed, and turning, walked quietly across the room to Joyce Eldridge, who was standing for the moment alone. Her dress was of white tulle trimmed with hyacinths and made in Paris. To Dilke's eyes it was a gown of

mist, fashioned in fairyland, and hung with celestial asphodels.

"I have come to say 'good night,' " said Dilke.

"So soon?"

"Yes, my reason for leaving early is the same as my excuse for coming late. I have a patient who is very ill." Then, looking closely at Joyce, he added: "Tell me how you are—how you really are?"

"Why do you ask?"

"You are looking thin and a little worn in spite of your high colour, and your eyelids are tired over the bright excitement of your eyes."

"Thank you. In other words, I am looking rather plain."

"You know," Dilke answered, "that you never looked lovelier. Your mirror told you that when you looked into it. I am not here to repeat its flatteries. I speak as a physician—and a friend."

"Thank you again, and this time I say it seriously. As a matter of fact, I *am* a little tired, but otherwise quite well—far better than you, judging by your looks."

"I am well enough, physically."

A soft sympathy dawned in Joyce's eyes. "I know," she said; "you don't mind my telling you that I understand."

"It is good in you—I knew you would."

"Yes," Joyce went on hurriedly, a swift, nervous colour rising in her cheek, "I thought it all over before I asked you to-night—I trust I did not make a mistake. I thought it would be easier for you to meet them like this in a crowd."

Dilke looked up bewildered; but before he could reply, a man on the other side of Joyce claimed her attention, and Dilke could only repeat his good night and leave the room.

Once outside the room and the house, he found himself dizzy, and wondered if he could have drunk more wine than he realised. There must be something wrong with him. Surely his mind must be bewildered to let such fancies creep into it as were assailing it now. He repeated Joyce's words over and over to himself. What did they mean? Surely, surely she had not thought, she could not think that he was in love with her cousin. Preposterous! And yet what other interpretation could he place on her sympathy, on her saying that it would be easier for him to meet "them" in a crowd?

It was—it must be true! Then how much or how little did it mean? Had it been a belief in this imaginary interest of his in Madame du Pont which had led to the indifference of Joyce's manner to himself?

In spite of himself, a wild wave of excitement swelled in a deluge over his soul. When it subsided it left him gloomy.

"No," he said to himself, "I will not think of it—not for a moment. I have opened my Pandora's box, and all the troubles that afflict humanity have flown out to sting me; but hope is still safely locked inside. Let her stay there till she dies for lack of food. If she ever escaped to whisper her soft promises in my ear, and then I found them lies and was forced to face the bitter truth again, I could not bear it—I would rather die."

Dilke came out of the house and started at a brisk pace walking eastward from Washington Square. The weather was damp, with a light fog hanging like a curtain of gauze among the trees in the park. The streets were wet and the reflection of the lamps lengthened themselves on the pavement.

There is a curious power in atmosphere to affect the memory, to bring back things seen and felt under similar conditions. Recollections of a night like this in Paris rushed back on Dilke's mind. Just so had the steam risen from the garden of the Tuilleries; so had the lights shone upside down from the pavements, and so had the figure of Joyce Eldridge moved before him like an apparition.

The fog seemed to have bewildered his brain. He could not think distinctly, could not reason clearly. Precisely how much or how little was it reasonable to attach to Joyce's words in the drawing room a few moments ago? Evidently their significance must be estimated in the light of the past. In vain he tried to recall every little circumstance in the past six months which could help him. Had this "ice maiden," as Newbold called her, ever shown a trace of warmth toward him? Had she blushed or paled when he took her hand? Even there on the steamer, when he had ventured for one blessed moment to lay his hand over hers, was there anything in her acceptance of that clasp which suggested more than friendship?

Honesty compelled him to answer in the negative.

So decisive was the response to his inward questionings that he began to doubt rather his interpretation of the scene which he had just left behind him. It was vanity alone, or vanity and love mingled, which had led him to read hope in eyes that spoke only pity. She was sorry for him, that was all; but what a nature it was that could exclude self enough for pity, and pity extended to the man who of all others had been most responsible for her own unhappiness!

If he could only see her alone, only explain how it had all come about, only know how she felt toward Brandyce, only clear himself at least of the odious suspicion of having been in love with Madame du Pont! For some strange reason that accusation rankled more than the suggestion of having failed in his duty to Brandyce. Perhaps because, conscious as he was of a feeling deeper than anything else in him toward Joyce herself, it seemed like a charge of falseness to his love, of treating lightly a devotion which, though unrewarded, must always remain the master motive of his life; because it had for him the force of an intimate presence as little to be evaded or escaped as life itself.

Of that strange misconception of his possible falseness to her, at least, he could and would dispose finally and forever. Joyce should not rest under that delusion a moment longer than he could help. He would go to her tomorrow. What or how much he would tell her he left to the interview itself to decide.

CHAPTER XVII

A DIVIDED DUTY

ON the morning after the Eldridge dinner, Dilke sat in his office figuring accounts. He had always found working with figures the best antidote for dreaming. It braced the mind to deal with hard facts, with actualities. There was no "if" or "perhaps" about $4 + 4$ or 77×89 . Things were either true or false, and results must tally with universal law which feeling was powerless to alter by a jot.

So closely was Dilke's attention engaged, that he scarcely raised his head from the ruled page before him when the office bell rang. The door opened and Senator Secor walked in. He was dressed in a quiet, faultlessly fitting suit of grey, and he wore a white carnation in the buttonhole of his coat. His whole appearance was fresh as the morning.

This man had been so constantly in Dilke's thoughts of late that his bodily presence seemed only a materialisation of mental impressions. The Senator stood in front of the table, sharply outlined against the sunlight which poured in

through the unshaded windows. Dilke, as he looked at Secor, seemed to be studying a tangible symbol of success, a mathematical demonstration of ultimate arrival. Here was a man who had pushed his way to the front, who had broken "his birth's invidious bar," had overcome or cast down every obstacle, had forced himself on public attention, had gained every prize on which he had set his heart.

Dilke experienced a protesting admiration as he watched him, and envied the foresight, the determination, the force which had made him what he was. Secor had been hampered by no tenderness of feeling, no hesitant scruples, no delicacy of conscience. These handicaps in the race of life he had thrown away, and behold the victor, smiling down at defeated competitors from the heights of his place in the Senate House!

Dilke felt his mind bewildered as these thoughts flashed through it inchoate and disconnected, as flying thoughts come.

"Good morning," said the Senator, a broad, good-natured smile rippling across his ample mouth and losing itself in the creases of his commodious chin.

"Good morning, Senator," Dilke answered, rising and playing with the papers on his desk as an excuse for not offering his hand.

"I came to see you on business," Secor went on, "and I chose this time because Miss Eldridge told me that it was your office hour; but as my business is personal rather than professional, you must not let me detain you from waiting patients."

With this the Senator cast a bland and impersonal glance at the empty chairs around the room.

Dilke flushed. "I have no patients this morning," he replied. "I very frequently have none. I am only a beginner, you know."

"Beginnings are always difficult," Secor responded. "I still have a keen recollection of my own. The worst of it is that in forcing our knife into the oyster we sometimes cut ourselves on the shell."

Dilke remained silent. His power of silence was a distinct social asset. In this case it forced Secor to show his hand before he had intended.

"Yes," he repeated, "I cut myself more than once, and though the wounds have healed, the scars remain. I am quite ready to admit that my early life was marked by indiscretions. I sowed my wild oats."

"They seem to have reaped a rich harvest," Dilke interrupted in a tone difficult to interpret. The Senator chose to accept it as complimentary.

"Yes, fortune has favoured me, as you say; but one looks back and regrets. One wishes to shut the door of the past and live in the present."

With this he sank into an arm chair which Dilke had neglected to offer, and said with a cordiality which had a genuinely winning quality: "Doctor Dilke, I have come to ask you to help me to shut this door, to bolt and bar it, so that I can go on with new courage for the future."

Dilke waited, determined not to be lured into an ambush. The Senator went on still more candidly.

"You know my past. You also know the woman who is to be my wife. There is much that women cannot understand. They should not be brought unnecessarily into contact with the rough facts of life. You agree with me?"

"I see your point."

"Ah," said the Senator, placing his fingers together and regarding them attentively. "That is what it is to deal with a clever man. There is no call for explanations when people are quick. You started out there in Pieria with village standards. I knew that when you came to New York you would begin to look at things as a man of the world looks at them. You would see that success lies at the top of the ladder. The upper rungs of the ladder are in the public

eye and should be open to inspection; but the foot must be underground and bear the marks of the soil. When I passed your window last year and saw that sign——”

Dilke turned white and bit his under lip till the blood came.

“When I saw that sign,” the Senator repeated, “I said to myself: ‘That young man will get on. He has dropped the sickly imbecility of expecting to reform the world and has adapted himself to existing conditions. The people want humbug. Let them have it!’”

While this talk was flowing easily from Secor’s lips, Dilke felt as if he were Faust and this Mephistopheles come to offer ironical congratulations on his joining the company of the damned. His one emotion was a wild determination to separate himself from this man’s association, by which he felt himself smirched and contaminated.

“That sign,” he said with slow emphasis, “was a dirty, dishonourable trick, to which I persuaded myself by a course of sophistical reasoning intended to stifle my knowledge that I was making myself a charlatan. The only patient it brought me was Mr. Eldridge, and I laid the whole matter bare before him the next day.”

“That was a still cleverer move,” the Senator

answered with a sarcastic glint in his eye. "Your sign attracted attention. Your candour clinched confidence. I admire you, Doctor Dilke."

Dilke dug his nails into his palms under the table.

"Our notions of what is admirable are so different," he said, "that it is quite useless to discuss the matter. Your business with me this morning, I judge, was to secure my silence as toward Madame du Pont, concerning any inconvenient episodes in your past which may have come to my knowledge."

"That was part of my business, and I should wish to put the matter on a business basis."

"Thank you," Dilke answered, his voice striving to be ironical, but choked by rising anger. "If you intend to imply an honorarium for my silence, I must assure you that it would not be acceptable. If I keep silence, it is because my relation to Madame du Pont is not such as to lead me to burden her with either advice or confidences. I regard her as a charming woman quite capable of conducting her own affairs."

Secor waved an appreciation with his hand from his shirt front outward toward Dilke.

"I am glad that you share my admiration for Madame du Pont," he said, "and I am grateful that I can depend on your judicious reserve."

At present evidently I am unable to testify my gratitude in material form; but if you should ever wish to go into politics and I could forward your advancement——”

“All that is quite out of my line,” Dilke interrupted. “Let us consider the episode closed. But you spoke of this as only part of your business. As my office hour is nearly ended and I have an engagement up town, may I ask if there is anything further about which you wish to consult me?”

“A minor matter, and I will finish it quickly,” Secor answered, lifting a paper-knife from the table and balancing it on his finger. “You know Captain Brandyce?”

Again Dilke felt as if Mephistopheles sat before him, touching every stop of pain in the organ of his being and striking discords which jarred through the whole gamut of his nature. But he gripped his self-control hard and held his features immovable.

“Yes, I know him,” he replied.

“It is about him that I wish to consult you.”

Dilke nodded, but made no verbal reply. He was gathering his powers to meet the situation as it might develop. He resolved on caution and reticence.

“Is he a man whom you would recommend?” Secor asked.

"For what position?"

"Hm! for a somewhat delicate one, involving tact, pliancy, and discretion."

"Brandyce has all three."

"Ah! So Madame du Pont tells me. Wonderful woman, Madame du Pont—keen and sharp as a razor."

"That will be a happy marriage," Dilke commented to himself; "no illusions on either side." It crossed his mind to wonder whether Mr. Eldridge had imparted his own doubts of Brandyce to Madame du Pont; whether, if he had, Madame du Pont would have been prejudiced thereby. From what Dilke had observed of that lady, he was inclined to believe that she would be very lenient toward any shortcomings which did not militate against worldly success. Perhaps, indeed, with her usual insight, she had perceived in Brandyce's failing a distinct element of usefulness to his prospective employer. Truly the Senator was justified in calling her a wonderful woman.

While Dilke was occupied with these thoughts he almost forgot Secor's presence till the latter continued:

"However, she advised me to consult you."

"I appreciate the compliment."

"Yes, she said you knew him thoroughly and would tell me what I wish to know. I am look-

ing for a private secretary who shall be, however, much more than is generally expected in that office. I should wish him to be my representative in matters in which I did not care to appear personally."

("Lobbying for the whiskey trust," Dilke commented inwardly.)

"I prefer a new man, not formerly associated with me."

("Clever scheme to disarm suspicion.")

"He would need to be accustomed to good society at home and abroad."

("International lobbying. Secor is spreading out.")

"In short, a man who would make a favourable impression, who would be true to my interests, which would also be his own, and who would not be fanatical in dealing with transactions involving delicate negotiations. Is this Captain Brandyce such a man?"

"Precisely."

"You would cordially endorse him, then?"

"You could not find a better man for the position, I should say."

"Thanks. Would you perhaps be good enough to open negotiations with him on my behalf? You would be at liberty to state that the salary would be a large one if he proves satisfactory. I am too good a business man not to

pay liberally for services demanding peculiar talent."

("In other words, for dirty work done by men of clean reputation.")

"And this at least you would surely consent to allow me to acknowledge as a business transaction with you."

"No, no, not that!" Dilke answered hastily, and then sat silent, studying the wall behind Senator Secor's head. Under the mask of immobility which confronted the visitor, a tumult of emotions was raging—emotions which Secor was as incapable of suspecting as of comprehending. Where did duty lie? This was a question which dominated all Dilke's queries. Brandyce was well suited for the place. There was no doubt of that. Secor had chosen with his usual mixture of luck and shrewdness. Moreover, the opportunity set Dilke's pulses to beating as he pictured himself going to Brandyce with this offer in his hand, saying to him: "Here is an opening to wealth, power, success; I bring it to you as payment of my debt and as a peace offering." But in reality he knew that the offer was devil-sent; that it meant bringing out the worst that was in Brandyce, shutting the lid of the coffin on any good impulses and resolutions which might have sprung to life in repentance for his past sins.

If he had sincerely repented and if Joyce Eldridge still clung to him, there was a possible future, a possible honourable career, still open to Brandyce. This bargain would close it. Could Dilke bring himself to lend a hand at such a transaction?

No one has learned to live who does not sometimes live in the lives of others, and for the moment Dilke made Brandyce's case his own, and strove to consider what offered most of hope and true betterment. At length he broke silence, saying:

"I will open the negotiations as you suggest, Senator; but I must be candid with you. If I speak to Captain Brandyce I shall set the case clearly before him. If he asks my advice, I shall give it. Do you care for my services on those terms?"

Secor smiled wearily, like a politician dealing with a college professor whose unfamiliarity with the practical world at once irritates and amuses him.

"You are quite at liberty to introduce the matter in any way you choose," he answered, "only I must ask you to emphasise the importance which I attach to the service, the political opening which it may offer, and the fact that a large salary goes with the appointment."

"I will not fail to do so," said Dilke.

The Senator rose. "If you will make an appointment with Captain Brandyce, I will see him at my hotel. And now I must apologise for taking so much of your time," he said, laying down the paper-cutter and looking straight at Dilke. "But I cannot be sorry. I feel that for the first time in my life I have met an honest man."

Dilke held out his hand. Was it vanity which moved him to concede what he had withheld at first, or was it a sudden appreciation of a latent manliness in this intriguing, unscrupulous, Mephistophelian politician?

Dilke himself pondered on the question, and after the door closed he decided that it was crass vanity to which he had yielded, an imbecile satisfaction in hearing himself called an honest man by one who had no standards of honesty; but while he stood in Secor's presence he felt himself swayed by the current of electricity which passes from man to man and explains the quality which we call magnetism.

All through the interview Dilke had been wondering at the change which had come over Secor—not that his morals showed signs of fundamental improvement, but that he had learned at least to veil them with a decent regard for other men's prejudices in favour of a different code.

Outward respectability seemed to be the latest but most cherished luxury which his wealth had been able to purchase. The manners and vocabulary of society he had acquired with astonishing celerity, and now he was drawing near to decency. Perhaps, after all, Madame du Pont had made as good a bargain as she deserved.

When Dilke found himself alone he gave way to a wild exultation. At last it seemed that fortune had put in his way a means of repaying his debt. Here at length was the *quid pro quo*, for which he had been vainly longing. He would state the case fairly, would set before Brandyce all the dangers which might beset his course; but, after all, Brandyce was a full-grown man. The ultimate decision must rest in his own hands, while Dilke would feel that however it eventuated, he had done his part. The opportunity for service had offered itself and he had grasped it. His mind had no room for any other feeling than joy. It was as if prison doors had been suddenly flung wide and the prisoner had a glimpse of liberty. At last the shackles of obligation were about to fall off and leave him a free man.

CHAPTER XVIII

PORT AFTER STORMY SEAS

NOT for an instant had Dilke lost sight of his purpose of seeing Joyce Eldridge. His mind was full of her. All other thoughts sank into insignificance beside the intensity of his desire to explain his position to her. He longed to be assured from her own lips that he had not in her eyes committed what was to him the unpardonable sin.

How he should phrase all that he had to say was not quite clear to him; but he had faith that it would come to him as he spoke. The main thing was the opportunity of seeing her alone. At first he thought of writing and asking Joyce to name a time when she would be free. Then that struck him as giving formality to an interview which he wished to make informal, at least in the beginning, so he decided to take his chance.

There is no truer saying, however, than that pleasant memories must be arranged for in advance, and when Dilke met Madame du Pont and Joyce stepping out of the Eldridge carriage

as he neared the house, he cursed his own folly in not forestalling such a happening.

It was too late, however, to arrange anything, and he was conscious of a double embarrassment in meeting these two women together—the one whom he loved and the one whom he was supposed by her to love, though the truth was known to the second, who for reasons of her own had evidently not revealed it.

It was easy to resolve to appear unconcerned, but quite another thing to carry out the programme. Dilke was not enough of a man of the world to play a part at any time, and especially when he was deeply moved as now. He was conscious that he was flushing high, that he was fingering his hat nervously, and that he followed the two women into the house with an air of embarrassment which would tend to confirm rather than to allay Joyce's suspicions.

A few moments later Senator Secor entered, but Madame du Pont showed no inclination to withdraw with him. In fact, she devoted herself rather ostentatiously to Dilke and left the Senator to talk with Joyce, who answered in obviously indifferent monosyllables. Only once did she manifest any interest, and that was when Brandyce's name was mentioned. Dilke looked up quickly and caught the flush on her

cheek, the trouble in her eyes. He longed to listen to what she was saying, but Madame du Pont held his attention closely.

She was talking of temperament, of how far it was innate and how far it could be cultivated.

"Temperament is the aroma of personality, isn't it, Doctor Dilke?" she said as she lifted the teacup which the Senator had handed to her. "You know it just as you recognise the bouquet of this flowery Pekoe before you put it to your lips."

Dilke smiled in spite of himself. The association of flowery Pekoe and Jake Secor was too diverting for his gravity. Madame du Pont, who had an uncanny power of divining what was going on in the mind of a person with whom she was talking, continued with a note of explanation in her voice: "Of course there are some characters so strong that they impress themselves directly and without any prelude of subtlety. That perhaps is the true American type, our contribution, as it were; and, to me, after living so long on the other side where everything is indirect and subtle, these direct, dominant natures have a peculiar interest."

"I can readily understand it," Dilke answered, his features under control once more. "It is doubtless the law of opposite attractions.

But meanwhile what have I done to be excluded from the sacred rites of tea drinking?"

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" Joyce answered from behind the tea table, turning toward him from the Senator, "I thought that you never took tea."

"I intend to make an exception this afternoon. Madame du Pont assures me that your tea is a symbol of temperament, and I wish to make an effort to penetrate the mystery."

If Dilke had hoped to make a diversion, he was disappointed, for no one moved except to widen the circle a little so as to make the conversation general; and to Dilke, whose mind was full of vital things, the touch and go of small talk quickly became intolerable.

After a few moments he rose. As he did so Henry Eldridge entered. His hearty manner and explosive welcome seemed to relieve the social tension—a tension which everyone had felt, though no one could have explained.

"Glad to see you, doctor!" Henry exclaimed. "It's lucky for you there aren't many men as healthy as I in New York. Feel that!" and he doubled his arm with visible pride at the bulging of the biceps.

"Henry!" said his sister in a vain effort to subdue her brother's manner to the conventions of the drawing room.

"What's the matter now, Joyce?" her brother answered with jovial self-assertion. "Can't a man show his muscle before people? Is it anything to be ashamed of?"

"We are willing to take it for granted," his sister began, but Madame du Pont interrupted her. "Don't try to change Henry," she said in an aside. "He is so delightfully typical."

Few people enjoy having those for whom they feel responsible regarded as "types." Joyce wished that Henry would learn to differentiate his down-town and up-town manners. She wished that Émilie's green eyes were not so keen. Above all she wished that Dilke would take his leave. From the beginning of his call she had felt that he desired to see Madame du Pont alone, and she was enraged with herself for lacking the social tact to separate herself and Senator Secor from the group. It was this feeling which had left her so unable to carry on a conversation. "Perhaps," she said now to her brother, "Senator Secor would be interested to see the gymnasium which you have fitted up in the basement. We might show it to him as a suggestion for his Washington house."

The Senator accepted the invitation with the smile of endurance with which the average man contemplates the inspection of the house of an

acquaintance; but to the surprise of Joyce, Dilke only hastened his farewells.

"I have nothing to say to you," he observed to Henry as he withdrew his fingers with difficulty from that youth's clenched arm. "It is simply an impertinence for a man to be in such robust condition after a summer in New York."

"Oh, but I spent a week with Aunt Sylvia at 'Old Field,' and a week in her courts is better than a thousand—much better!"

Madame du Pont smiled approval. "You found it a little dull?" she questioned encouragingly. Émilie du Pont was an adept in the art of inducing others to say things which she wished said.

Joyce frowned, but her brother declined to be suppressed. "Dull!" he exclaimed. "It was deadly. The flowers were asleep in their beds. The coachman nodded on his box, the horses jogged along with their eyes shut. When we drove, every butcher's wagon passed us on the road; but Aunt Sylvia did not care. She said the speed of other vehicles was a matter of indifference to her; that she was out to enjoy the delightful air.

"Ridicule," Joyce exclaimed, indignantly, "is a poor return for hospitality. After a visit——"

"This was not a visit; it was a course of lectures."

Dilke, seeing that Joyce was really disturbed by Henry's ill-timed pleasantry, sought to end the situation by taking his leave.

"Good afternoon, Madame du Pont," he began, paused an instant, and said, turning to Joyce: "Could you give me half an hour to-morrow morning? I want to speak to you about your father—and other matters——"

In spite of himself, a note of earnestness crept into Dilke's voice and alarmed Joyce.

"You don't think my father ill? Please tell me the exact truth. He is not seriously ill?"

Scarcely a day goes by in a doctor's life that he is not greeted by some such question, asking for the truth in one breath and pleading to have it tempered to the anxious heart in the next.

Dilke instantly reproached himself for the unnecessary pang which he had inflicted. "No, indeed!" he said hastily; "I did not mean to alarm you——" Then, catching Madame du Pont's eyes fixed upon him with an expression hard to read, an expression which he had never seen in them before, he bowed and withdrew in some confusion.

The Senator followed him several paces toward the door.

"Have you spoken to Brandyce?" he asked.

"No, I am on my way to see him now. You

have nothing to add to what you told me this morning?"

"Nothing. But I should be glad to hear from him as early as possible, and I shall hope for a favourable reply."

"You certainly offer a great deal," Dilke answered, "and I will ask Brandyce to answer promptly."

The Senator smiled.

"I see," he said, "that you do not mean to set out the situation in glowing colours, and you think Brandyce will have scruples—will decline. Now I would like to lay you a wager that he will accept."

"I think myself that he will," Dilke answered as he took his leave.

The Senator turned back into the drawing room. Henry ran whistling up the stairs, and Joyce was moving to follow him when her cousin gripped her wrist with a fierce energy. "Don't go!" Madame du Pont whispered in so urgent a tone that Joyce sank into an easy chair and looked at her cousin in bewilderment. There was a note in Émilie's voice which she had never heard till now, a note of entreaty and appeal.

Joyce looked at her in surprise. The lightness of manner was all gone. This was a real woman with a real woman's emotions speaking in these

hurried accents, as Madame du Pont played nervously with the rings on her left hand.

The Senator was walking slowly up and down the room. Both women fixed their eyes upon him. Joyce wondered what it was which differentiated him so completely from Doctor Dilke. The surface was not so different; but something in Secor's manner suggested a veneer applied over a coarse grain. One who wished to like him would hesitate to probe deep.

"A curious man, that Dilke!" the Senator said, winding his watch chain round his finger, as he stood in front of Madame du Pont. "I don't think he has chosen his profession well. He will never succeed with women, and naturally most of his work will lie with them."

"He is certainly not a ladies' man," Joyce commented.

"No," Secor answered. "He is too blunt, too uncompromising, to get on with men, and much more with women, and yet I should not be surprised to see some woman fall desperately in love with him."

Madame du Pont narrowed her eyes to a green thread as she shot a glance at Joyce, who was tying her wisp of filmy handkerchief into a series of hard knots and bending her head above it till her face scarcely showed.

"I should be sorry for any woman who fell

in love with Doctor Dilke," Madame du Pont said with dry lips. "In my opinion he is not a man to give away his heart or to have it worth taking if he did. His real interest and absorption will always be in his work. His wife would always be second in his thoughts."

"I do not agree with you, Émilie," Joyce said, throwing her head back suddenly and facing her cousin with wide, courageous eyes. "I think Doctor Dilke is capable of falling in love royally, flinging his heart at a woman's feet without calculation or any thought of himself at all, and of going on loving to the end whether she cared or not. There is Papa!"

Joyce rose as her father's footstep was heard in the hall, and went out of the room, leaving Secor and Madame du Pont together.

There is nothing more embarrassing for people who are not in love than to be left in a position where they are expected to behave as lovers. There was no misunderstanding between Madame du Pont and the Senator. They both accepted frankly the fact that their marriage was one of convenience, of ambition on her part, on his of the choice of a wife likely to help him forward. Both believed that matters would arrange themselves naturally after marriage; but these preliminary days of courtship were not without their awkwardness, which not

even Madame du Pont's diplomacy could wholly ease. They felt it peculiarly now that they were alone together.

The Senator walked to the window and looked out for a moment. Then he said: "It strikes me that your cousin spoke with more heat than the occasion warranted. Is she by any chance a little touched in that direction?"

"Really, I know nothing about it," Madame du Pont answered. "Joyce has never favoured me with any confidences." When she had spoken so far a sudden angry colour rose in her cheeks, and she added unsteadily: "As for Doctor Dilke, I wish you would never mention his name to me again—I—I *hate him!*"

Meanwhile Dilke, all unconscious of the discussion going on in the Eldridge drawing room, was pondering on Secor's last words and on his own answer.

"I think he will take it. Yes, Brandyce will jump at the offer, no doubt. But what will the end be?"

Strongly stimulated by the keen October air, he walked briskly along the northern side of the square, his blood tingling in his veins with the mere physical intensity of existence. He was cheered by the gaiety of the park filled with a diverse crowd of humanity. Loungers were reading their daily papers on the benches,

children wheeled to and fro on roller skates, and in the background, against the deep blue of the sky, rose the marble arch which stands like a connecting link between the world of business and the world of fashion.

At the corner he turned into Fifth Avenue and walked on still more briskly till he reached a hotel much frequented by foreigners, a hotel where he himself had often stopped, and where, as he knew, Brandyce made his headquarters when in the city.

He was full of a vague expectant eagerness not unmingled with embarrassment. The look in Brandyce's eyes as he had passed him in the companionway of the ship was still vivid in his memory. What if the same look met him now! What if Brandyce turned upon him with scorn and refused to accept a favour at his hands! He felt that he could not blame him. Brandyce would be justified in regarding him as that worst of enemies, a friend who has failed in the crucial test of friendship.

If he had robbed this man of his chance of winning the woman whom he loved, what a paltry exchange must seem this offer which he was bearing to him! No savage was ever treated worse in bartering a lump of gold for a string of beads. The more Dilke reflected on the matter the more his courage sank. He

half wished that Brandyce might have left town. Then he could write, and it is always easier to handle a difficult situation in writing—at least then there is no perturbing glance of contempt, no interpolated sarcasm, to cause a stammering apology. Yes, on the whole he distinctly hoped that Brandyce had gone. And yet in that case he would miss the reconciliation to which he had looked forward, the self-justification to which he had aspired. He would be merely Senator Secor's amanuensis transmitting a business communication. In this mixed state of mind Dilke arrived at the hotel. As he entered the office, the hotel clerk, who knew him, looked up and nodded. Then he said suddenly: "Oh, Doctor Dilke, a man in room 131 has sent down to ask for a physician, and we were just going to send out for one. They say he seems very ill, and we're anxious to lose no time. Perhaps you can see him."

Dilke hesitated. "Yes," he answered, after a moment, "I will take a look at him, though I am in rather a hurry. What's his name?"

The clerk looked at the hotel register to refresh his memory. "Eustace Brandyce," he said; "registers from London."

"Eustace Brandyce!"

"Do you know him?"

"I crossed on the steamer with him. In fact, I had called to see him this afternoon. Where is his room?"

"Here," said the clerk, calling to a bellboy, "show this gentleman to room 131."

As Dilke made his way to Brandyce's room he had a sensation of helplessness, as if the hand of fate were on his shoulder pushing him forward. He had feared to feel embarrassment, but when the door opened and he saw Brandyce lying there on his bed, he was conscious that the issues were too large, the crisis too momentous, for any small emotions.

"Ah, Brandyce, I am sorry to see you like this," he said, going close to the bed.

The sick man raised himself.

"They sent for *you*!" Brandyce exclaimed, with something like irony in his tone.

"No. They did not send for me. I happened to drop in as they were arranging to summon someone. You can have somebody else now; but they spoke of haste, and I thought I would come as a stop-gap.

"Kismet!" exclaimed Brandyce, with an attempt at a laugh which set him coughing.

"Stop talking, please, and lie down. There—that's right. Now, let me feel your pulse."

Brandyce obeyed as to lying down; but he went on speaking, still with irony in his eyes.

"You think you're going to save my life, don't you, to make things quits? Well, you're not. I took precious good care not to send for a doctor in time, because there was always a chance that he might do the trick. I dare say it would have been safe enough, but they do blunder on a cure now and then, and I did not choose to risk it. Now if you can give me something to stop the pain, I'll thank you."

Dilke made no answer in words. He was counting the pulse, and saying to himself, as the passing stranger said of Keats, "There's death in that hand."

"A neglected cold, I suppose," he commented aloud.

Brandyce nodded.

"How long have you had it?"

"Oh, for some time, ever since I landed, in fact."

"How long have you had fever?"

"For several days."

"And you have done nothing—taken no medicine?"

Brandyce shook his head. Then he put his hand to his side and winced as if the pain were intolerable. Still he would persist in talking.

"I am off my head sometimes," he said. "If I say things, remember they do not mean anything."

"They rarely do," Dilke answered. "When people are delirious they babble like Falstaff. Let me listen to your lungs, please."

"Bad— isn't it!" exclaimed Brandyce hopefully.

"Very bad," responded Dilke gravely. "Now I tell you, Brandyce. If I take your case I am going to do all I possibly can to cure you, and you must help me, or I will send another physician. As for sitting by and seeing you commit suicide while I sign the certificate—I will not do it. You may not care for life. I am sure that I do not. But, if I go into the case, I shall go in to win if I can."

Brandyce smiled with a trace of his old gayety.

"Go in, then," he said; "that is, if it will amuse you to try."

"And you will take the medicines and do as I say."

"It will make no difference. Yes—I will do as you say."

"Good! The first prescription is that you speak only when absolutely necessary and then in a whisper. The second order is that you pull the coverlet over your chest and lie still till I come back. I shall be gone about five minutes."

Once outside Brandyce's room, Dilke dashed

into the office, ordered a nurse from the nurses' registry, ran to the nearest drug store for brandy, drugs and appliances which he needed, and then, breathless, re-entered the sick room, prepared for a hand-to-hand fight with death.

"Double pneumonia—very alarming case," had been his diagnosis to the clerk, and he saw no reason to change it as he stood looking down at Brandyce, who had fallen asleep in his absence. The livid lips, the dusky flush on the cheek, the laboured shallow breathing, told a discouraging story; but Dilke would not listen to the whisper of discouragement. He felt as if destiny had thrown in his way one last chance to regain his self-respect. Brandyce had stated the case with cynical frankness. If he could save this man's life they would be quits.

While these thoughts were seething in his mind his hands were busy cracking ice and preparing medicine. As he attempted to administer the dose Brandyce roused, but not to consciousness. Delirium had set in. He talked hurriedly and with gasping breath, now of a children's party, now of the army, now of work for his paper. He seemed oppressed with the feeling that he must prepare "copy," and Dilke had all that he could do to hold him down.

He quieted after a little; but still went on talking, softly now as if he were speaking

to a woman. His words were scarcely audible, but the note of pleading was distinctly perceptible.

Dilke felt as if there were a kind of indelicacy in listening, and almost feared to catch a meaning which he could not misunderstand.

He turned hastily and walked to the window, which looked out upon a court. Blank walls and drawn shades met his gaze, but he did not see them. That face on the pillow filled his imagination and left no room for physical vision. The pale, aristocratic profile, the sensitive, smiling mouth seemed clothed with a new and spiritual beauty. "Surely, surely," Dilke argued with himself, "such a face must be the index of a sensitive soul **within**, a nature with immense latent possibilities of good, gone astray by some strange freak of education or inheritance—some black drop of poison in the blood bequeathed by a recreant ancestor. Oh, why must we be such slaves to the past, and how unequally the spiritual inheritance of the ages is divided! Two heirs to the same blood, and behold the difference in result, in the parting of the ways.

"From the same cradle's side,
From the same mother's knee,
One to long darkness and the frozen **tide**,
One to the peaceful sea!"

Dilke sighed heavily and moved back to his old station by the bedside.

Thankful enough he was when the nurse appeared to re-enforce him. He had given up all thoughts of going home. The symptoms pointed to a crisis at hand in the night or the early morning. He must stay. As he sat by the bedside in the softened light of the night lamp, Dilke wondered to think that only a few hours ago he had been drinking tea and chattering of nothings. No contrasts which our imaginations conjure up exceed those which occur in real life in our own lives and leave us bewildered as to which is real and which unreal.

In such seasons as this we are compelled to meet ourselves face to face, and the encounter is often disagreeable to both parties. Dilke knew that he was fighting for Brandyce's life from no altruistic purpose; but partly from the acquired professional zeal which rises most alert and most resolute before a desperate case, partly from a desire to atone for the past, to feel that, having discharged his debt, whatever he might have said, or might see fit to say in the future, was his own affair.

His thoughts drifted to Joyce, and he wondered if he were bringing Brandyce back to life for her. If this were so, it was perhaps but a doubtful kindness that he was doing her,

yet this had not been given him to decide. He was there only to struggle to the end.

In the nature of things death cannot affect the physician with the same sense of shock with which it strikes the rest of the world. It is too familiar to his experience. But there is perhaps a deeper solemnity in it to "an eye which has kept watch o'er man's mortality."

Then, too, disease has a certain terrible beauty in his eyes. He sees it as an enemy of mankind, yet no longer as a strange wild beast leaping out of the undiscovered dark upon its victim; but rather as a foe marshalled under unalterable law and marching with ruthless rhythmic motions, a foe which may be combated with weapons which science has put into the hands of man and which there is a profound satisfaction in wielding to the extent of one's ability, even if the fight at last prove hopeless and the victory lie with the enemy.

A little before dawn, as the nurse was preparing the milk and brandy, Brandyce opened his eyes bright with delirium.

Dilke moved. The sick man sat up in bed before the doctor could prevent him.

"I call your bluff!" he cried, throwing out his hand with a triumphant smile, and fell back—dead.

"There was no hope from the first," the nurse said.

Dilke shook his head gloomily. "No hope from the first," he assented, echoing her words.

He realised now, however, by the keenness of his disappointment that there had been hope in his own mind and that he had scored another failure, to embitter his life. It is seldom that men are permitted to check off their account with destiny as if it were a bank.

The nurse pulled up the shade at the window. The morning light fell greyly on the dead face. Dilke stepped close to the bed and took Brandyce's cold hand in his.

"Good bye," he murmured. "And wherever you are, let there be peace between us!"

As he turned away, there shot across his mind the words spoken by Napoleon's physician in closing the eyes of the great dead: "*Ainsi passe la gloire.*" "If glory," thought Dilke, "why not shame?"

CHAPTER XIX

AFTER ALL

WHEN Dilke had superintended the final arrangements, always painful in their brutal practicality, following so soon on the footsteps of majestic Death, he went out into the avenue. The street was full of early morning bustle. Heavy trucks lumbered along on their way up town, automobiles whirled by, shop girls crossed hastily from the side streets toward their business on Broadway, newsboys were running up and down steps dropping papers at the doors of the houses.

The last sight brought sharply back to Dilke's mind one morning a little less than a year ago, when he had been walking the streets as now, and he remembered how eagerly and fearfully he had snatched the morning paper.

A year ago—was it only so long? It seemed now as if he were looking back at it across infinite ages. Why, his whole life had happened since then!—and yet he could place no event. He no longer reckoned from dates in the calendar, but from the day on which he first met

Joyce Eldridge, the occasion of his first encounter with Brandyce.

His watch by the sick bed had been a season of inward purification for Dilke. His ministry to the dying man had swept away every feeling toward him but that of pity. He no longer hated or condemned. He was bowed beneath a new humility and the tenderness of an un-availing sympathy.

It is rarely possible to keep in the morning the mystic heights which we gain in the night. The Sancho Panza within us rises to nudge the elbow of Quixote, bidding him leave his dreaming and wake to the practical issues of the day. So it was with Dilke. He must bathe and change to his morning dress, visit his office, inquire into the condition of his patients, write prescriptions, open his mail, answer his letters, all as if he had gone through no great experience, as if no further ordeal still lay awaiting him.

When he had done these things he started to retrace his steps down the avenue, and as he did so his thoughts turned to the other night's dinner. He recalled with stinging acuteness Secor's remarks, and saw them in disproportionate magnitude. He fancied Secor saying to himself: "Here is a man who posed as the only honest man in the board of library trustees there in Pieria, a Cato who could not be bribed,

at least by money which was not to find its way into his private pocket; but when it came to a question of earning his living he was ready to stoop to any expedient. What a hypocrite!"

It gave Dilke no comfort to reflect that Secor could not look down upon his conduct from any superior heights. It was not this man's contempt which Dilke resented; but his fellowship.

Perhaps it was true that everyone had his price. Secor's was the vulgar bait of a vulgar ambition. Madame du Pont was about to marry him for an ambition equally vulgar if expressed in more subtle terms. Brandyce had cheated in the eagerness of play—and he himself—had he too not flinched in the crisis of his fate! Who was he that he should say to any one of them: "Go to! I am holier than thou"?

The remembrance of the dinner had turned to gall and wormwood. It is the small things which make us most unhappy, perhaps because they are so trivial that we are not braced against them. We nerve ourselves to meet the surgeon's knife; but the pin-prick finds us unprepared and therefore the readier to cry out.

With the thought of the dinner, the image of Joyce Eldridge rose full and vivid on his inward eye—Joyce flushed and vivacious,

in gayer mood than he had ever seen her before, yet with a shade too deep a colour in her cheek, a brightness in her glance which suggested that the gayety was not wholly natural but the result of some nervous tension resolutely held in check, perhaps of some profound sadness, thrust back into her heart and covered by this surface buoyancy.

All through the night of his watch beside Brandyce's death bed this vision of Joyce had been present with him. While every thought seemed fixed upon the dying man, every energy bent toward devices for possible aid to him, there had been an underlying consciousness of the woman to whom Brandyce's life or death might be of such overwhelming importance. When the issue was decided, when Death had spoken its final "Never! Never!" still his thoughts turned insistently toward Joyce. All the time, as he was moving about and making a final clearing of the room before summoning the clerk of the hotel, his thoughts were busy with Joyce Eldridge.

What would she say when she saw the death notice in the papers? Would it quite break her heart?

The more Dilke thought over the matter the clearer one thing became in his mind. He must go to her, must see her before her eyes were met

by the cold print of the public notice, and break the news to her as well as he could. It was this intention which had driven him through his morning tasks with such feverish energy. He had been awake and at work since dawn, and it was only half past ten when he retraced his steps to the Eldridges' door. He half feared, half hoped that Joyce might have gone out; but it was not so.

As he sat waiting for her in the drawing room he tried fifty ways of stating his message. One seemed flippant, another brutal, a third cruel. Should he plunge into it at once or try to lead up to it? Would it not after all have been better to write?

Joyce's entrance put an end to all questionings, and she herself gave him his opening.

"How ill you are looking—as if you had not slept at all!"

"I have not slept. I have been up all night with a very sick man."

"The one of whom you spoke last evening?"

"No, another—one for whom I felt far more deeply because I knew him. You knew him too."

Joyce paled.

"I knew him?" she repeated.

"Yes, it was Captain Brandyce."

"Captain Brandyce?"

It seemed as if all that Joyce could do was to echo Dilke's words. The man before her decided that it would be kindest to let the blow fall at once.

"I found him very low with pneumonia," he said. "We tried everything we knew to save him, but it was too late."

"You think that he is going to die?"

"He is dead."

Joyce sank slowly into a chair behind her. The great tears welled into her eyes.

"Terrible!" she exclaimed.

"I—I knew that you would feel it so," said Dilke, turning away as if there were indelicacy in peering into her trouble. "That is why I came to tell you instead of leaving you to read it in the papers, and I thought that perhaps you could give me the address of Brandyce's relatives here, the ones at whose house you met him first."

Joyce pondered, her finger on her lip. "I am afraid," she said, "that they have sailed for Europe. I met his cousin last week and she spoke of their going on Saturday."

"Then we must arrange to notify them, and meanwhile we must hold some sort of service——"

"You must have him brought here now—at once," Joyce exclaimed. "I am sure that Papa will wish it. Oh, I hope—I hope that you are

telling me the truth. He did die of pneumonia—and not—not by his own hand?"

The girl paled and shuddered as she spoke.

"I give you my word," said Dilke gravely, "that I am telling you the exact truth. That is what I came here to do."

Joyce rose and stood with her back to the table, gripping its edge with both hands for support.

"Oh, I am so sorry!" she exclaimed. "And yet so glad that it came as it did!"

Only one sentence—and yet it carried conviction to Dilke's soul and changed the world for him. It was sympathy and not love which spoke in this low tone. The relief was almost too great. Dilke felt his own voice tremble as he put the next question:

"Then it will not break your heart?"

"No," Joyce answered, raising her eyes full to meet his. "It will not break my heart. Did you think that it would?"

"I felt sure of it," said Dilke.

Joyce swayed a little unsteadily, but she made no reply. Dilke stood looking at her with every sense on the alert, noting the pale blue of her gown, the little slippers peeping out underneath its ruffles. He longed to fall down and kiss them, and all the while he was saying over and over to himself like an idiot who knows only one sen-

tence in the world: "She does not care for him. She does not care—she does not care."

"Tell me one thing," he said at last aloud: "Perhaps I ought not to ask you this; but I have been carrying a burden which has become intolerable. Tell me honestly. Did your father repeat to you my conversation with him?"

"Yes," said Joyce, drooping her head till Dilke could no longer read her eyes. "He told me what you had said."

"Did that have anything to do—was that why you ceased to care for Brandyce?" Joyce was conscious of a peculiar vibration in Dilke's voice, such as she had heard only once before when they talked of love in the twilight on the Lake of Geneva. She gripped the table still harder. Whatever happened, she was determined to show no weakness now. Yet she had difficulty in forcing her lips to speech. She wished that Dilke would not look at her as she could feel him doing now, although her eyes were cast down. She wished—she did not know what—but speak she must.

"I refused Captain Brandyce the morning before your talk with my father."

"Then that had nothing to do with your refusal?"

"Nothing."

"Thank heaven for that!" Dilke paused a

moment after he had said it, and then went on.

"One more question——"

"I may not choose to answer it."

"There is no compulsion; but I think that out of kindness you will. Did you think it dishonourable in me to speak?"

"If there was anything dishonourable it was not that. You owed candour even to a stranger in such a matter, and I had thought—had fancied that you did not regard me quite as a stranger—I remember indeed one morning in the reading room of the hotel there in Paris when you asked to be my friend, when you promised me the truth, the strict truth, as the basis of that friendship."

Joyce's voice grew indignant as she went on: "Did your conscience never suggest to you that you were breaking that compact in keeping silence in an affair which you believed of vital consequence to me? Were you so absorbed in the thought of what you owed to Captain Brandyce that you had never a misgiving as to what you owed to your friend? Of course, however, when you spoke of being my friend you meant nothing by it. It was only an empty phrase, and when other deeper feelings came, and your interests were absorbed—but I will not go on—I did not mean to hurt you—forgive me!"

The colour burned in Dilke's face. "Forgive

you?" he exclaimed. "I confess that I find it hard to forgive you for making such a mistake, for misjudging me like that. I can pardon all that you say of my silence. God knows I said it over to myself often enough, and called myself harder names than any that you could invent, yet speak I could not. I *knew* nothing till that last night on the ship. I only suspected. And I thought that you cared—I was sure that you cared for Brandyce. He had saved my life. There was nothing open to me but silence and withdrawal. It seemed to me then the only honourable course. My vision might have been clearer, my action wiser if I had not feared all the time to be blinded and prejudiced by my own love for you——"

Joyce groped a little with her hands before her face, as if she were clearing away a fog. "By your love for me!" she repeated. "Oh, no! no! You do not know what you are saying. Remember, we pledged ourselves to speak truth to each other!"

Dilke made a stride toward her, but stopped with his arms folded across the back of a chair at a little distance. He was breathing hard and spoke with difficulty.

"Listen, Joyce," he said. "You and I have played at cross-purposes long enough. You thought that I was in love with Madame du Pont?"

"You were, you know——"

"Pardon me—I do not claim to be a very wise man. I may, as Mrs. Fenwick says, have very little grip on real life; but I think I have intelligence enough to know with what woman I am in love. There has never been any other. She was the stranger of a year ago, the stranger of whom we talked—do you remember?—there in Paris. But she has lived in my heart till I know her better than I know myself. No one will ever take her place. Do you really mean that you did not suspect it—you, who see so much that is hidden, did you see not that, which must have been written in my eyes every time they turned toward you? Oh, you are not so dull as that! Why, everyone knew it—Newbold—Madame du Pont——"

"Émilie!"

"Certainly. On that day on shipboard in your stateroom, when you had fainted and I was talking all sorts of incredible folly, I looked up and saw her standing there; she had heard it all!"

"Émilie!" Joyce repeated again, incredulously, and then added under her breath: "Oh, Aunt Sylvia, how right you were!"

Dilke bowed his head above the high back of the carved oak chair and closed his eyes as if to shut out the sight of Joyce. When he spoke

again, it was with the calmness of a man who has regained a nearly lost self-control and means to hold it.

"I must not speak now," he said. "I must not come nearer, or stretch out my hand to touch yours. I will not. It would seem another wrong to that dead man lying still unburied. I must go away, and do penance yet a little while; but some day when I have made my peace with myself and with the memory of Brandyce, I shall come to you and ask you to be my wife."

Joyce lifted her eyes and looked at him for an instant. Then she left the table and crossed the room to the low, old-fashioned marble mantel. She folded her arms upon it, and bending her head, laid her hot cheek against the cool marble. It was a gesture of surrender but also of pride. It said as plainly as words: "If you have not spoken, I have not answered."

Dilke understood it and was content. He walked backward out of the room, holding all the time the figure by the mantel in his fixed gaze. When he closed the door behind him, a new look was on his face, the look of one who has talked with "Shining Ones."

